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The Church in the Fort

The Church in the Fort

And Other Sermons

By

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* THE CHURCH IN THE FORT

"Then did he build Millo."—1 Kings 9, 24.
"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."—Matt. 5, 14.

The "Millo" here referred to was the fortress on the heights of Jebus. It was wholly impregnable on three sides, and on the fourth easily defensible. In the conquest of Palestine it was only partially reduced: as it is written, The Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, could not be driven out (Josh. 15, 63). They were perforce allowed to remain to be a thorn in the side of Israel for four hundred years. At length in the time of David the stronghold was taken by stratagem and completely destroyed. The threshing floor of Araunah, near by, was purchased as a temple site (2 Sam. 24, 18–25); and in due time the house arose, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." This was the original "Church in the Fort."

It was a thousand years afterwards that Jesus, preaching on the shores of Gennesareth, made mention of the "city set on a hill" whose light could not be hid. It may be that he referred to Safed, twelve miles to the north; or to Tabor, on the southwest crowned with its castle: but the probability is that he was thinking of Jerusalem to which the heart of Israel ever turned. It was preeminently "a city set on a hill"; and its light was that of the mysterious Shekinah, shining to the glory of God.

* This sermon was preached on the tenth Anniversary of Dr. Burrell's Pastorate in the Collegiate Church.

It is a far cry from the heights of Jebus to the Island of Manhattan, covering a lapse of three thousand years; but I call your attention particularly to that later "Church in the Fort" which is perpetuated in our own Collegiate Church of New York.

The year 1609 is ever memorable in history. Thirty-seven years before, William of Orange had led the Netherlands in their revolt against Spain, in which the mighty principles of the Reformation were at stake. It is estimated by the learned Grotius that in that notable conflict not less than a hundred thousand Dutchmen laid down their lives for the truth's sake. At length Philip III of Spain, worn out by the protracted drain on his resources, was constrained to propose an armistice. The armies of Holland were disbanded and her fleets called home. New avenues of investment must be found for the energies thus suddenly released. Rumors were current of an Eldorado, in the West; of a short passage to the Indies. So it happened that, in that memorable year of the armistice, the "Half Moon," Hendrick Hudson skipper, manned by adventurous souls who had distinguished themselves on the high places of the field, set forth upon her adventurous voyage. Forth she sailed, past the Pillars of Hercules, out upon the Western Sea. In due time she touched at Newfoundland, felt her way southward to Sandy Hook and entered the mouth of the North River. A month later to a day she sailed back to Holland and reported, not the open passage which had been looked for, but a great river running through a land of unspeakable beauty and fertility, navigable for a hundred and fifty miles and "frequented by fur-

bearing animals and native red men." The thrifty spirit of the Dutch merchants was moved by that reference to fertile lands and fur-bearing animals; and the Churches were stimulated by the hope of evangelizing those naked red men. Thus expeditions followed one another in quick succession; and trading posts were established along the Hudson at intervals all the way from Manhattan to Albany.

In 1621—another red-letter year—was organized in the Netherlands the West India Company, which was destined to play an important part in the settlement of the New World. In its charter, as framed by the States General, it was stipulated that emigrants going forth under its authority must, for the benefit of the savage tribes as well as their own spiritual protection and edification, take with them a suitable number of deacons or *zieken-troosters*, to teach the young, visit the sick and conduct divine services, pending the arrival of ordained clergymen. One of the vessels that sailed under this Charter was the "Sea Mew," taking with her three men who were destined to play an important part in the making of our country. One of these was Peter Minuit, an Elder in the Church, to whom grateful tribute is paid, on a mural tablet recently placed in the Middle Church of this City, as "a wholly incorruptible man." He was the first of the great Patroons and the original director-general of this Commonwealth. In one of the art collections of New York there is a picture of a commercial transaction which occurred on the Island of Manhatas at this time. The scene is at the southern extremity of the Island, near the Battery. In the distance are the heights of Staten Island; in

the foreground stands Peter Minuit, the Director, attended by his Provincial Secretary, the Sheriff and the Zieken-troosters. Red men, with their squaws and children, are gathered about examining with wonder the cloths and trinkets spread upon the green sward.* The price paid for the Island was a paltry sixty florins, or about twenty-five dollars in our currency: but, trifling as the compensation seems, it assumes vast proportions when contrasted with the methods of acquiring territory in other quarters at that time; namely,

> "The good old plan,
> That he may take who has the power
> And he may keep who can."

Had this honest mode of dealing with the Indian tribes been followed elsewhere and in later times, there would have been fewer massacres in our history and less of national remorse for those "centuries of dishonor," which are ending in the practical extermination of a noble aboriginal race.

The two other notables who came over in the "Sea Mew" were Jan Huyck and Sebastian Krol, the Zieken-troosters, to whom were entrusted the spiritual affairs of the settlement. These men, in addition to their religious duties, were expected to look after the education of the children. They were the pioneer schoolmasters of America. The school which they opened was turned over, seven years later, to Adam Rolandsen, as Head-master—and it still exists, the oldest institution of learning in America, as "The Collegiate School," on Seventy-

* There is, in passing, a singular parallel between this transaction and that of David purchasing the threshing floor of Araunah for sacred uses.

seventh street in this city. Honor to whom honor is due. The school-laws of Massachusetts, requiring that a Master should be employed for every fifty families, were passed in 1655; but they were in practical operation on Manhattan Island a quarter of a century before. Far-sighted men were these Dutch settlers: they foresaw the dangers that lay in an ignorant suffrage, and, with their customary foresight, thus early made provision against it.

In 1628 the Reverend Jonas Michaëlius arrived, under appointment of the Classis of Amsterdam, to minister to the people of the Island of Manhatas in holy things. He had been looked for with much expectancy. One may imagine the welcome that awaited him; how at the landing he was met, with pomp and circumstance, by men with wide-skirted coats and queues tied up with eel-skins, and women in white caps and voluminous petticoats; how, passing along the narrow street with its scolloped gables, he entered a home, whose sanded floor had been marked with quaint figures by the skilful housewife's broom; how he was entertained at a generous table spread with bread and buttermilk and oely-koeks. We have a brief account of a service held one Sabbath morning in the loft of the horse-mill (which had for two years been used for divine services led by the two Zieken-troosters) in a letter, written by the good Domine about four months later.* It is addressed to "The honorable, learned and pious Mr. Adrian Smoutius, faithful minister of the holy gospel of Christ in his Church, upon

*This letter of Domine Michaëlius is one of the treasures of the Lenox Library in this City.

the Heerengracht, not far from the house of the West India Company, Amsterdam." He says: "*The voyage was long, namely, from the 24th of January till the 7th of April, when we first set foot on land. Of storm and tempest, which fell hard upon the good wife and children, though they bore it better as regards seasickness and fear than I had expected, we had no lack, particularly in the vicinity of the Bermudas. . . . Our coming was agreeable to all, and I hope, by the grace of the Lord, that my services will not be unfruitful. The people, for the most part, are rough, and unrestrained, but I find in most of them both love and respect towards me; which, in our calling, as your Reverence knows, are especially desirable, in order to make our ministry fruitful. . . . At the first administration of the Lord's Supper which was observed, not without great joy and comfort to many, we had fully fifty communicants, Walloons and Dutch; of whom, a portion made their first confession of faith before us, and others exhibited their church certificates. We administer the Holy Sacrament of the Lord once in four months, provisionally, until a larger number of people shall otherwise require. The Walloons and French have no service on Sundays, otherwise than in the Dutch language, for those who understand no Dutch are very few. . . . I keep myself as far as practicable within the pale of my calling, wherein I find myself sufficiently occupied. And, although our small Consistory embraces at the most, when brother Krol is down here,* not more than four persons, all of whom, myself alone excepted, have also public business to attend to, I still hope to separate carefully the ecclesiastical from the civil matters which*

* It appears to have been arranged that the two deacons, Huyck and Krol, were to divide their services between Fort Manhatas and Fort Orange, now Albany.

occur, so that each one will be occupied with his own. . . . As to the natives of this country I find them savage and wild, strangers to all decency, yea, uncivil and stupid as garden poles, proficient in all wickedness and godlessness; in whom I have as yet been able to discover hardly a single good point, except that they do not speak so jeeringly and so scoffingly of the godlike and glorious majesty of their Creator as the Africans dare do. But it is because they have no certain knowledge of Him, or scarcely any. If we speak to them of God, it appears to them like a dream. . . . From the Island of Manhatas in New Netherland, this 11th day of August, Anno, 1628, by me, your Reverence's very obedient servant in Christ: JONAS MICHAËLIUS." It is one of my pleasures, as the successor of Domine Michaëlius, to imagine him thus installed in the room above the horse-mill, looking out on the primitive scenes of our city's earlier life and musing of the future. The voices of those who were engaged in the sports of the Bowling Green fell upon his ears; he noted the sails appearing at intervals on the distant sea; he dreamed dreams and saw visions: but surely, in his wildest flights of fancy, he never supposed that the young Commonwealth would one day lead the van of nations, or that this island settlement was destined to be the industrial center of the world.

The Church thus established in Fort Amsterdam, —the small beginning of our Collegiate Church and of the Denomination known as "the Reformed Church in America"—stood for certain important facts.

In the first place, it was in its time a conspicuous landmark of Orthodoxy; that is, loyalty to the fundamental facts of the Universal Church. To be more

specific, it stood emphatically for the two great truths of the Reformation, namely, the Supremacy of Christ and the Authority of Holy Scripture. In one of Carlyle's essays he says: "Those Dutch are a strong people. They raised their land out of a marsh and went on for a long period of time breeding cows and making cheese: and might have gone on with their cows and cheese till doomsday. But Spain comes over and says, 'We want you to believe in St. Ignatius.'—'Very sorry,' replied the Dutch, 'but we can't.'—'Aye, but you must,' said Spain. And they went about it with guns and swords to make them believe in St. Ignatius. Never made them believe in him; but did succeed in breaking their own vertebral column and raising the Dutch into a great nation."

Let it be remembered that the men who constituted this Church in the Fort had been in the very thick of the great conflict. The confused noise of battle was familiar to their ears. They knew the horrors of the Inquisition, the Spanish Fury, the thunders of the Vatican, the clangor of St. Bartholomew's bells. The little country from which they came had been for a century the theatre of events. It alone had, up to this time, fought to a finish the mighty conflict for civil and ecclesiastical freedom. Holland was a refuge for the oppressed of all nations. Thither came the Puritans, fleeing from persecution in England; the Covenanters, from their conventicles among the hills; the Huguenots, driven from France; and all were afforded a welcome. Thus the men of Manhatas knew the value of truths dearly vindicated; and, in their frontier home, they never swerved from loyalty to their convictions. Christ and the Bible

were their watchwords. The Incarnate Word and the Written Word, each complementary to the other, both alike inerrant, and together constituting a complete Revelation of the divine will.

It is sometimes asked why, amid the controversies which have vexed the other denominations in our country, the Reformed Church has enjoyed an undisturbed peace. The answer may be found in the rigid Terms of Subscription by which its ministers are held to its doctrinal symbols. They are set forth in the Constitution as follows: "*We, the underwritten, testify, that the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Confession of the Netherland Churches, as also the Canons of the National Synod of Dordrecht, held in the years 1618 and 1619, are fully conformable to the Word of God. We promise, moreover, that, as far as we are able, we will, with all faithfulness, teach and defend, both in public and private, the doctrines established in the standards aforesaid. And, should ever any part of these doctrines appear to us dubious, we will not divulge the same to the people, nor disturb the peace of the Church, or of any community; but will communicate our sentiments to the ecclesiastical judicatories under which we stand, and subject ourselves to the counsel and sentence of the same.*" Now turning to the Canons of the Synod of Dort, we find the following statement as to Inspiration, the doctrine which has furnished the chief occasion of controversy in these times: "*We receive the books of the Old and New Testament, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost*

witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling. . . We believe that they fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us, is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: Nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden, to add unto or take away anything from the word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither may we compare any writings of men, though ever so holy, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to compare custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, with the truth of God, for the truth is above all."

It is obvious from the foregoing, that ministers in the Reformed Church in America are held, in common honesty, to a rigid adherence to the truthfulness of Holy Writ, as well as to the cardinal doctrines of our common faith. We, who have affixed our signatures to those historic symbols, are obliged, so long as we remain in this fellowship, to declare their propositions without fear or favor, save the fear and favor of the living God.

It is with us as it was with Latimer on the occasion of his famous "recantation" before Henry VIII. He had been summoned to appease the royal wrath on account of a bold discourse on the previous Sabbath. He announced his text, and began with a

soliloquy on this wise: "Hugh Latimer! Remember before whom thou appearest this day. The King of England hath power to cast thee into the dungeon; aye, to take away thy life from thee. Take heed, therefore, what thou sayest before him." Then, pausing a moment, he continued, "Hugh Latimer! Remember from whom thou comest this day. The King of kings, before whom all sovereigns must bow; whose thou art and whom thou servest. He hath power to cast both thy soul and body into hell. Hugh Latimer! Take heed that thou declare fearlessly the whole counsel of God!"

In the second place, the Church in the Fort stood, as the Reformed Church still stands, for Catholicity. Not for a spurious catholicity, or so-called "liberalism," which involves a compromise of loyalty to truth. At that point there can be no compromise. Truth, as it presents itself to an honest mind, is of more value than life itself. Nor is there any compromise as to ecclesiastical polity. The statement that the Reformed Church is "semi-liturgical"; is incorrect. It has indeed a complete liturgy, which may be used in whole or in part, being purely optional; but our Denomination is not semi-liturgical, nor semi-doctrinal, nor semi-ethical, nor *semi* anything. It stands ever for whole and positive facts.

But it stands for them in a spirit of fraternal magnanimity. It acknowledges, with cordial and broad affection, the Christian status of all ecclesiastical bodies holding to the authority of the Incarnate and Written Word of God. An example is found in the courtesy which was extended to the Episcopal Church at the time of the English occupation in 1664.

At that time the Episcopalians, having no place of worship, accepted the invitation of the Dutch Domine and his people, and for a period of twenty-nine years held services in the Dutch Church in the Fort.

An illustration of still greater significance is found in the persistency with which the old Church held to the Voluntary Principle in religion. The conflict in Holland had turned, in fact, upon the question of the Establishment; that is, whether or no all people have an equal right to worship God in their own way. It was for this that the city of Leyden was held until its defenders were emaciated with hunger and the dead lay unburied in the streets. And when, in their extremity, the demand came for surrender, they hurled defiance over their walls in those historic words, "Rather will we eat our left arms that we may have strength with our right to defend the freedom of conscience." The men of New Amsterdam proved themselves to be worthy sons of those noble sires. No sooner had the English taken possession of New Amsterdam than the effort was made to set up a State Church. Not once, nor twice, but thrice was it proposed by the legislative councils of this Commonwealth to legalize exclusively the Anglican form of worship; and on each occasion it was resisted and defeated by the representatives of the Church in the Fort. Their feeling as to such an Establishment was formulated, a hundred years later, by an Irish orator, into whose soul the iron had entered, in these words: "It is a foul and adulterous connection, which pollutes the purity of heaven with the abomination of earth, and hangs the tattered rags of political piety on the insulted cross of a cru-

cified Redeemer!" In the Constitution of the United States there is an article prohibiting forever the erection of a State Church. I believe that article would never have been framed but for the unswerving attitude of our Dutch forefathers. The credit is usually given to the Puritans of New England; but, in deference to the justice of history, it must be remembered that the Voluntary Principle was never fully recognized by them, as shown in their treatment of the Quakers and Anabaptists. The words of Mrs. Hemans, written in their honor, might far more appropriately be used to characterize the spirit of the Dutch pilgrims:

> What sought they thus afar?
> Bright jewels of the mine?
> The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
> They sought a faith's pure shrine.
>
> Aye; call it holy ground,
> The ground whereon they trod;
> They left unstained, what there they found,
> Freedom to worship God.

In the third place the Church in the Fort stood for a Noble Spirit of Enterprise. Let this be emphasized in view of the fact that the Reformed Church has been characterized as "that people whose strength is to sit still."

The inquiry arises, How does it happen that a church, which has a preëmption right, so to speak, in this continent, can show only four hundred thousand adherents, while the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian brethren count up into the millions? The answer is not far to seek.

One reason is found in the brief tenure which the

Dutch had on this Island. They were in possession only until 1664; that is, during a period of thirty-six years. And at the time of the English occupation, when they were dispossessed, the town of New Amsterdam consisted of three hundred houses with a paltry population of fifteen hundred. The "preëmption right," therefore, was but a slim affair.

Another reason is to be found in the facility with which the Dutch people have ever coalesced with their environment. The vital current of their life has lost itself in the arterial system of our country. It is significant that one never hears of "Dutch-Americans." On the other hand the Scotch, the Germans, the Huguenots who settled in the Carolinas, the Cavaliers of Virginia, and the Puritans of New England have kept themselves more or less separate and distinct. The course of Puritan influence in America may be traced as clearly as any river course. The Dutch factor in our civilization has been rather like the dew which comes not with observation, and reveals itself only in beneficent results. You awake in the morning and finding the grass greener, the air fresher, you say "Last night the dew fell." It is impossible to estimate the extent or depth of influence exercised upon our American institutions by those who, in these passing centuries, have with little or no self-assertion, maintained thus unswervingly the great fundamental facts which make for civil and ecclesiastical freedom.

And still another explanation of the relatively inferior numbers of the Reformed Church lies in its magnanimous attitude toward other ecclesiastical bodies. It has deferred to them, as Abraham did to

Lot, saying "Behold, the land is before thee; take thou the left hand and I will take the right; or take thou the right hand and I will take the left. Let there be no strife between us." And surely this, if it be a fault, is one of those "faults that lean to virtue's side."

But if the Reformed Church has been at default in Home Missions, it may point with pardonable pride to its work in universal evangelization. It was as a Foreign Missionary that Dominie Michaëlius came to the New World, turning his back upon his home and father's house and going forth like Abraham "to a country that he knew not." And to day there is no denomination in Christendom that shows statistically a larger devotion to the great work of the kingdom than ours. Dr. Francis E. Clark, on his return from a recent trip around the world, said to me, "I have made a canvass of missionary stations wherever I have gone, and nowhere have I found anything superior to the work which is being done by the Reformed Church. In Japan, India, China, Arabia, the success of your missionaries is a proverb. And they themselves, your Verbeck, your Scudders and Chamberlains and Zwemers and others, are mighty men of God."

At the close of my ten years in this Denomination, as one of the ministers of the Collegiate Church, permit me to bear testimony to what is being accomplished on this Island. The old Church in the Fort is loyal to its honorable traditions. It stands as ever for truth, for broad Catholicity, for holy zeal. Its people, undisturbed by strifes and jealousies, can sing with heart and understanding, "Blest be the tie

that binds." And as to the ministers with whom I have been associated during these years, I have never known a truer, kindlier, more devoted body of Christian men.

And now as to the outlook. The golden chanticleer on the spire of this beloved church calls us to newer and more earnest life. We cannot live upon the record of the past, however honorable it may be We cannot grind our grist with waters that have gone by. Two things we need above all: One is *denominational loyalty.* Not that we should love less our brethren of the other churches, but that we should love more and more the Denomination to which we are bound by covenant vows. It has a definite place in the sisterhood of churches. It stands for something· and it should take its place in the forefront of the phalanx which advances to the conquest of our country and the world. It is said that the bell which summoned the people to worship in the Church in the Fort had been captured in Porto Rico, during the wars of the Spanish Fury. How history repeats itself! To-day that country, taken from the Spaniards, is a dependency of our beloved land. O that we might hear again the old bell, calling us to meet the new responsibilities laid upon us by the logic of events, calling us to fall in line with the imperialism of the great propaganda, calling us to lend an eager hand, in the bringing of all peoples to the saving knowledge of the gospel of Christ.

And we need, finally, a larger enthusiasm in every department of the service of Christ. These are days of spiritual conquest. It is no time to be recanvassing the discussions of cardinal truth. It is recorded

of Scipio, that, on returning from his victorious campaign in Africa,—a campaign so glorious that it gave him his title "Africanus,"—was met at Rome not, as he had hoped, by welcome acclamations, but by frivolous charges of malfeasance in office. He was summoned to the Forum ; the indictment was read, and he was called upon to answer. He began at once to rehearse the victories of his African campaign; and continued thus until nightfall. The next morning he was summoned again to answer. "Citizens of Rome," he said, "this is the anniversary of the battle of Zama. A year ago to-day I led the militant hosts of Rome against Hannibal and the Carthaginians. All that day we upheld the Golden Eagle on the field. Night came, and many of your friends lay dead with multitudes of the foe. We had won a glorious victory for Rome ! O citizens, is it a time for parleys and conferences ? Let us hence to the temple, and render our thanksgiving to the gods !" And the people bore him away upon their shoulders, leaving the Tribunes alone. We, in our churches, have been all too zealous in controversies that ill befit the time. The call is no longer for apologetics but for dynamics. God wants reapers who shall thrust in their sickles and reap for him. In the reaping of to-day and the garnering of the future let us highly resolve that, as in the seed-sowing of the past, our Denomination shall bear its part. True to the splendid courage of our forefathers, let us uplift the banner of the cross, and with the old watchword *Oranje boven !* lend our utmost strength to the bringing of our country and the world to Christ.

THE OLD BOOK AND THE NEW CENTURY.

"The Voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."—Isaiah 40, 6-8.

The legendary siege of Troy was carried on for a period of ten years without effect. The army of the Greeks, a hundred thousand strong, crossing the Ægean in a thousand ships, encircled the doomed city as in the coils of a great serpent. On the surrounding hills were planted catapults, from which an unceasing tempest of great stones went hurtling through the air. At length, with the use of battering rams, a breach was effected in the outer ramparts, and the army surged through, only to find the Trojans secure in their citadel. All the strength and ingenuity of the invading host were then directed against this ultimate stronghold, which was finally taken by stratagem. A wooden horse, purporting to be a propitiatory offering to Athena, but really containing a band of Greek warriors, was sent by the Greeks and received by the unsuspecting Trojans within their citadel. At night the warriors issued forth and opened the gates to the beleaguering host; and thus Troy fell.

The citadel of our religion is the Bible. It is the only authoritative testimony as to him of whom we sing, "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not surprising, therefore, that the fiercest assaults of Antichrist have, from the beginning, been directed against these Oracles. In the Garden of Eden our first parents were tempted by the suggestion, "Yea, hath God said?" and "Yea, hath God said?" is still the scornful and contemptuous challenge of the enemies of truth.

As we look backward from the border line of the centuries, we observe that there has been no cessation in the attack upon the Scriptures. The Nineteenth Century was ushered in amid a lurid storm of infidelity. In France, the Reign of Terror had swept away all sanctions of the Moral Law. It was solemnly resolved in the Corps Legislatif that there is no God; the Sabbath was erased from the statute books; the friends of the Encyclopedia were chanting requiems at the tomb of Christianity; Voltaire said, "I am going through the forest of your Christian doctrines and I will girdle every tree, so that presently not a sapling shall be left to you." All Europe aped the freethinkers of France. In our own country religion was at its lowest ebb. It is said that in the year 1800 there were only three professing Christians in Yale College. Thomas Paine brought the manuscript of his "Age of Reason," in which were presented all the stock arguments against the inerrancy of the Scriptures, to his friend Benjamin Franklin for review. "Do not unloose this tiger," said Franklin; "if our people are what they are with the Bible, what would they be without it?" But the

tiger was unchained. Paine and his confreres appeared to have everything their own way. A great tidal wave swept over the country. It seemed as if the foundations of the mighty deep were broken up.

The Twentieth Century comes in amid a similar tempest. He is but a purblind seer who does not perceive that Christianity has made magnificent progress; yet every step of that progress has been fiercely contested. And there is a startling contrast between the former methods of the adversary and those of to-day. In our time, the assault is wholly from within. There is an ominous silence in the Trojan camp. The great leaders of open and avowed infidelity are gone. Bradlaugh in England and Ingersoll in America were the last of the old guard. Open warfare has given way to strategy. The Trojan horse has been brought within the walls; and a body of militant critics, many of them wearing the sacred garb of theological professors and ministers of the gospel, have been attempting to draw the bolts of the citadel gates. Here is a significant fact: there is not a fundamental truth of the Christian religion which has not recently been called in question and assailed by men in holy orders, by men solemnly covenanted to uphold and defend those very truths. The objective point of the assault is now, as ever, the integrity of Holy Writ. It is well understood that if the citadel be overthrown, the city falls.

And what is the result? It might easily be supposed from the blowing of trumpets and beating of drums, and from the frequent claim that all scholarship is arrayed against the credibility of the Scriptures, that the Lord himself had retired from the field. But he

that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh! Let us not be deceived. The thing that hath been shall be. Despite the boastful prophecy of Voltaire, there are saplings still growing in the forest of God. There are reverent scholars who do not trumpet their achievements or blazon them on the dead walls, and multitudes of devout people who are not taken up in the lips of talkers. The Lord reigns, and the citadel is safe. The heart of the universal Church beats true to the integrity of the Word of God.

Let us now review more specifically the salient points of the controversy of these hundred years. Let us inquire how this continuous assault has affected the integrity of the Scriptures, if at all.

I. *As to their Literary Value.* How stands the Bible as literature; as a mere book among books? Here there is no difference of opinion. "Of making many books there is no end." Is there anywhere a living man who would venture to assert that any one of the many thousands of volumes issued by the press during the last year is comparable with the Bible in literary merit? And this is the more noteworthy when one pauses to consider that the old Book was produced in a remarkable way, by forty-four different writers, representing all sorts and degrees of civilization, whose work covered a period of sixteen centuries, and was sealed with a "Finis" nineteen hundred years ago. Where will you find such poetry? John Milton said, "There are no songs like the songs of Zion." Or such oratory? Daniel Webster said, "If there is aught of eloquence in me, it is because I learned the Scriptures at my mother's knee." Or such profundity of logic? Lord Bacon said, "There

is no philosophy like that of the Scriptures." Where will you find such unity, such completeness of beauty and power? Froude said, "The Bible is in and of itself a liberal education." Where, among all the multitudinous volumes of the ages, will you find aught worthy of a place beside it? "Bring me the Book," said Sir Walter Scott on his death-bed.—"What Book?"—"There is but one, the Bible."

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the sun:
It gives a light to every age,
It gives and borrows none.
The Hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat;
His truths upon the nations rise,
They rise but never set.

II. *As to the Science of the Scriptures.* Here, they say, is their most vulnerable point. There are those who would foil the adversary by asserting that the Bible was not meant to be a scientific book. Granted: but it was meant to be a true book, every way. The veracity of the witness must not be impugned, here or anywhere else, lest that venerable rule of evidence be quoted against us; *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus.*

It is claimed with much vociferation that great scientists of the past, as of our time, have been arrayed against the scientific statements of this Book. But what of Descartes and Locke? What of Sir Isaac Newton and Michael Faraday? What of Dana and Agassiz and Lord Kelvin? The last words of Professor Dana of Yale to the Class of '67 were these: "Young men, you are going out into a world where you must meet an unceasing attack upon your faith.

Let me ask you to remember, as my parting counsel, that whenever you are in doubt amid the confused voices of scientific controversy, you may always with perfect confidence affix your faith to any statement of the Word of God."

The one proposition of the Scriptures which has challenged contradiction is its doctrine of Origins, to wit, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." To meet this, the doctrinaires have suggested a theory of evolution which, it is asserted, is now universally accepted. So far is this from being true that we may safely leave the disposition of this theory to scientists themselves: since it is most vigorously opposed in that quarter. Charles Darwin, head-master of the guild of evolutionists, was frank to admit that evolution is as yet a mere hypothesis. We may be excused for insisting that, under such circumstances, the shout of victory on the part of those who deny the Mosaic cosmogony is premature. The age-old view of the creation has not yet been overthrown by a hypothesis. Gibraltar is not to be battered down with a bulrush.

Nor have the efforts of the experimentalists met with any better success. They have much to say of Autogenesis, or a beginning without God. As an oldfashioned believer, I, for one, am ready to surrender my faith in the Biblical doctrine of origins, so soon as one of these experimentalists shall create a single grain of sand. Surely this is not overmuch to ask of men whose magic has to do with worlds and universes. Let them produce a daisy, or a caterpillar, to begin with. But until some such result shall have been attained, we may be pardoned for

standing by the old manifesto, "In the beginning, God."

III. *As to the Historicity of the Bible.* The attack here has been directed at the Pentateuch. How much of the Pentateuch remains? It all remains. Not a single event recorded in those venerable chronicles has been successfully impugned. On the other hand the researches of archæologists have verified, one after another, such of its statements as had been called in question. It was long asserted, for example, that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because the art of writing was undiscovered in his day. Then came the Man with the Spade, and from the exhumed ruins of Tel el-Amarna it was made evident that Babylonish kings were corresponding with each other a century before Moses was born.—It is said again that the story of Israel and the Pharaohs was unhistoric. Along came the Man with the Spade and opened the sepulchers at Thebes; and in the Museum of Boulak to-day the mummy of old Meneptah, the Pharaoh of the Exodus, ends the argument.—It was insisted again that the tale of Balaam and Balak must have been fabulous, since Jews and Moabites spoke different tongues. But the Man with the Spade unearthed the Moabite Stone, and revealed the fact that the Jews and Moabites spoke kindred dialects of the Hebrew.—The existence of the Hittites was persistently challenged on the ground that no mention was to be found of any such people except in the Scriptures: but the Man with the Spade dug up the ruins of ancient cities, and made it plain from royal seals and cylinders that the Hittites had not only lived but had

contended for mastery among the nations of the earth. Thus, one by one, the objections against the historicity of the Pentateuch have been met and answered. It is as if God had prepared a great "trial ledger," recorded on the walls and tombs of buried civilizations, by which to verify the chronicles of Scripture, when any venturesome caviler should presume to challenge them.

IV. *As to the Theology of the Scriptures;* that is, their doctrine of God. There are no atheists in our time. The infidelity of the last century has not busied itself in denying God so much as in making new gods. The Pagan world has still its pantheon of idols formed of wood and stone: but civilized idolaters have been industriously making gods of their own fancy. They are none the less idols; since, having eyes, they see not and, having ears, they hear not. Any god save the God of the Bible will answer for the freethinker of these days. Any but the God of Creation, of Providence and of Grace! Law, Force, Energy, the All-pervading Soul of the Universe, a "Something not ourselves that maketh for Righteousness." What matters it, which you prefer? All are mere specters. All are dull, senseless things. In vain do their devotees cry, "O Baal, hear us!" There is no voice nor answer nor any that regardeth.

The result is precisely what it was in ancient Greece; in the midst of the shrines and statues stands one altar, representing the consummate fruit of human wisdom, inscribed, "To the unknown God!" and still rings forth the voice from Areopagus, "Him whom ye ignorantly worship, declare we unto

you." The God of the Bible remains the only God who satisfies our need. He alone rules over the destinies of nations and of men. He alone hearkens to the cry of pain and ignorance and guilt. He alone is the God of Salvation. And this God is our God forever and ever!

V. *As to the Ethics of Scripture.* How much of the Moral Code here set forth has perished in the hot fires of these hundred years of controversy? It all remains; it remains with not so much as the smell of fire upon it.

The two great ethical symbols of Scripture are the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount, which is Christ's exposition of it. Who has aught to say against the Decalogue? Is there anywhere a man bold enough to pass adverse judgment upon it? Or who presumes to criticise the Sermon on the Mount?

Let the moral code of the Scriptures be judged by its fruits. Time, the great sifter, has demonstrated beyond all cavil or peradventure that this Code can do two things. It can make a nation. Of all the great governments of the earth founded upon the principles of civil and ecclesiastical freedom, of human enlightenment and human rights, there is today not one that is not embraced within the charmed circle of Christendom and that does not reflect in its constitutional franchise, in its laws and jurisprudence, the ethical system of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount.

And this morality of the Bible also makes men. For between its two great ethical symbols stands Jesus Christ, the living illustration of the perfect Law, an exemplar to all right thinking and right

living men. To imitate Christ is character: to follow in his steps is usefulness: a true Christian is, as Alexander Pope said, "the highest style of man."

VI. *As to the Plot of the Drama.* For the Book is, indeed, a drama with a purpose running through it, clear, progressive, climacteric as the theme of an Oratorio. A "thin red line" begins at the gateway of Paradise, where the first altar is reared and the earth is stained with blood. We follow it through Chronicle and Psalm and Prophecy, with ever increasing interest, perceiving more and more, in the light of multiplying altars and watch-fires, that some supreme event approaches. Suddenly there is a gush of music from the Judean hills: "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth and good will among men!" The denouement is at hand! Yonder on Calvary the Hope of Israel, the Desire of all nations, is dying in anguish, bearing the world's sin in his own body on the tree. Then another burst of music from the heavenly heights, "Worthy art thou to receive honor and glory and power and dominion forever and ever, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us by thy blood!" This is the plot of the tragedy; the crimson path that runs from Genesis to Finis.

And the singular fact is that the story thus related with a divine picturesqueness makes a personal appeal to every man. "It finds me," said Coleridge; "the Gospel finds me." It must needs be so, since every man is conscious of sin, of a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and of a desire to escape the threatened doom. "What shall I do to be saved?" is the cry of the sin-cursed race. And just here is where the Gospel "finds us."

And, let it be said with all possible emphasis, that here the Scriptural plan of salvation stands alone and solitary. There are other religions and other philosophies which undertake to solve great problems and suggest plans of right living: but there is no religion and no philosophy outside of the Scriptures which suggests a rational mode of escape from the guilty past. All others are ineffectual religions. Not one is able to save from sin. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us, and "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

VII. *And what shall be said, finally, as to the Central Figure of this Book?* Has the adverse criticism of the century robbed us of Christ? Nay; he remains, our peerless Lord! His name is "Wonderful." Wonderful in his birth. Wonderful in his life,—a life condensed in the brief monograph, "He went about doing good." Wonderful in his death: "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage," said Rousseau, "the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." And wonderful in his influence through all the passing years.

A "Hall of Fame" has recently been instituted in connection with the University of New York, and a score of names has been chosen to be inscribed on its granite columns. Call the roster and then call the name of Jesus; and lo! by what a bridgeless gulf is he separated from them all!

In his exile Napoleon said, "My life once shone with the brilliance of a diadem, but now, who cares for me? Cæsar, Alexander and I dreamed of universal empire. Cæsar and Alexander, where are they? And I shall soon be forgotten. But Jesus

died eighteen centuries ago, after founding an empire upon love, and at this hour there are millions of men who would die for him." It is true that the glory of his name increases with the passing centuries. The voice of his enemies is silenced; and his praises are sung by a great multitude whose voice is as the sound of many waters:

> All hail the power of Jesus' name!
> Let angels prostrate fall,
> Bring forth the royal diadem,
> And crown Him Lord of all!

We have gone round about the citadel: we have canvassed the various points where the attack has been converged. No sign of weakness appears. The Old Book stands! It stands like Gibraltar with the wreck of hostile fleets scattered at its base. It stands like Eddystone, despite all swirling tides and buffeting storms, casting a steady light over the broad seas. The Citadel stands! The assaults of the enemy have not breached its walls from without, nor have its bolts been drawn by treachery within. The Citadel stands, and over it floats the red banner of the cross.

A hundred years ago Lord Chesterfield, while visiting Paris, was entertained at the table of a distinguished lady of the Encyclopedia, a bitter foe of Christianity. She said to him, "My lord, I am informed that your English Parliament is composed of five or six hundred of the most profound and brilliant thinkers. This being so, will you explain to me how it is that under their authority the Bible is still recognized in the legislation of your country and the obsolete religion of the Nazarene is main-

asked as the Scriptures: He answered, "Behold, this is a most important matter! We are seeking about for something better, and what that is the servants, the Bible and Christianity must give way."

The world has been seeking about, during all these centuries, for something better, and has not found it. Universal Mankind will still produce their gods, and kings and potentates may search for the new religion, as they have hitherto done, by the light of Scriptural lore and science. But meanwhile men and women will go on, loving their Bibles and believing in Christ. The mockers will not be convinced by the scoffers, and seekers will search the Scriptures for a hope of salvation, and will find it at the cross. The weapon has not yet been formed that shall prevail against the unquenchable Word. "All flesh is as grass, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand for ever."

THE TRUTH-SEEKER

"I applied my heart to know and to search and to seek out wisdom and the reason of things."—*Ec.* 7, 25.

Truth is the principal thing. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir. The business of an earnest life is to find it; a nobler quest than that of the Argonauts for the golden fleece, or of Arthur's Knights for the Holy Grail.

The old-time world was propelled by the sheer force of armies and exchequers. Now, knowledge is power. The man of influence has put off chain-armor and clothed himself in a student's garb. The Overthrower does as Shakespeare said he would,—

> "Comes at the last, and with a little pin
> Bores through his castle-wall,—and farewell king!"

A new leverage has been found for the uplifting of the world. The power is truth; its operator is the man who thinks. He has crowded physical strength and martial prowess from all the highways, has assumed preëminence among men.

All the world knows that not Victoria but Salisbury is the colossal figure in the government of Great Britain. Crowns are but tawdry relics. The queen is the carved mermaid on the ship's prow, but

the premier holds the tiller. The "poor wise man" who, as Solomon says, "delivered the little city," is no longer forgotten. The thinkers are the kings of to-day.

The power on the lever that lifts the world is Truth. All truth is welcome; truth in art, in science, in old chronicles; truth of intuition, Scripture, old red sandstone, encyclopedia; sunlight, moonlight, rushlight; welcome all!

"More light," cried Goethe, "Open the windows!" It is being done. Men are reading; readers are thinking; the schoolmaster is abroad; the mind of the people is pressing hard on the lever, and the world is being lifted every day further into the light.

Thus knowledge has come to be not power only, but honor as well. After Von Humboldt's death, his gold medals were found lying about in corners and neglected nooks, while pressed leaves, specimens of ore and fossils had been preserved with jealous care. Of how little moment are badges and decorations to the man of whom it may be said, as of Buddha, "His eyes are opened!" The price of wisdom is above rubies. Its laurels will be green when emeralds are dust.

The true warriors of civilization have been meditative, rather than martial men. Chaucer, John Milton, Burke, and Bolingbroke, John Bunyan, Addison, Newton, Ben Franklin; these and their kinsfolk are the puissant knights whose footfall will be longest heard along the thoroughfares of progress.

"Arms and the man I sing." "Nay," says

Carlyle, "*tools and the man* is the epic of these days." And it may be added that, not the man wielding, but the man welding, is the central figure. The inventor is hero of the epic. Not the miner, digging in the bowels of the earth, but Sir Humphrey Davy who made mining feasible by the invention of the safety-lamp, is "the man" we sing. The power is not in handicraft, but in the mind within and over it. Who won Sedan? "Von Moltke," says the schoolboy; but further on he will answer, "Krupp, the spectacled dreamer, who invented the great guns." Who drives the ship? Men at the engines or before the mast? or those who have perfected the sailor's art, constructed his nautical tables, and traced his pathway through the deep?

The man in the forefront of battle and the artisan with sleeves rolled up, stand out most clearly in the common view; but the propulsion of both is from silent chambers where students sit toiling by midnight lamps. Who remembers or cares to remember that Cicero and Xenophon and Thucydides were great generals in their day? We should long ago have ceased to call King Alfred "the Great," despite his valorous deeds, had he not established a perpetual lien on the future by founding the University of Oxford.

The Truth-seeker is not a mere book-worm; not a pedant; not an apostle of "culture," not such a figure as Dr. March has painted, "armed at all points with glittering generalities, ready to bear his part in a discussion of everything honorable and talkable, ashamed not to know when everybody died and all about the old battles of the kites and the crows, as Milton says, and talking

> 'Frensch ful fayre and fetysly
> After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe.'"

Nay, rather, he is a modest lover of wisdom; aspiring to touch the reality which is the soul of things material and spiritual; one who counts himself not to have apprehended but eagerly, hopefully reaches forth; ambitious less to be reckoned *sophos* than *philosophos;* this is the Thinker, the Truth-seeker of to-day.

I. He is, wherever you find him, *a Pioneer*; not too loyal to old landmarks, willing that the world shall move and men move with it; willing to hear men sing:

> "Ring out the old, ring in the new!"

if only they will further sing

> "Ring out the false, ring in the true!"

The needs of the fathers were not as ours. The manna that was gathered for them, left over until the morning, breeds worms.

> . . . "New problems arise,
> And expansion of soul on a lordlier plan
> And a ceaseless ennobling of life and of creed:—
> For the endless progression of thought and of deed
> Is the crown and glory of man."

The Truth-seeker must boldly sail past the Pillars of Hercules. On both sides of Gibraltar they stood, bearing on their formidable fronts the legend, "No more beyond!" A courageous mariner said, "I will see;" and the Pinta sailed out upon the open waters, prow westward, day after day, until at length yonder rose the palm-trees of San Salvador!

Ne plus ultra? Nay, "the beyond," is illimitable. And there are no San Salvadors for stay-at-homes. An

over-faithfulness to the past is like that Doubt, whereof Shakespeare said, it

> ' . . . makes us lose the good we oft might win
> By fearing to attempt."

The Truth-seeker must, therefore, be an adventurer. There are five boundless worlds waiting for him beyond the seas: *The World of Books.* Twenty-five thousand new books are published every year. What a continent for a man to lose his way in! Take heed therefore. If "reading maketh a full man," as Bacon said, there is manifest danger of surfeit and dyspepsia.

The World of Events. Two good eyes are of more value than all the Bodleian alcoves. The art of these days is Observation. Surgeons are made not so much in lecture rooms as in clinics and hospitals, where wounds are dressed and arteries tied up. The weaver knows less of his own fabric than does the bystander who patiently observes and catches the pattern as the shuttle flies.

The World of Nature. The wisest geologists are those who have gazed most intently on the pages of "the great stone book." The last volume written by the most popular of modern scientists was about earth-worms. Do you remember Kepler's prayer, "I thank thee, Father of the Universe, that thou hast filled me with rapture over the works of thy hand, and hast permitted me, a feeble creature, to think thy thoughts after thee"?

The World of Human Nature. Spurgeon tells of a friend with whom he could not stop five minutes under an archway without learning something. It is good for men to look into each others faces; thus our

best faculties are whetted, "as iron sharpeneth iron." How many fail for want of tact and versatility in dealing with men. It is a true saying, "The proper study of mankind is man."

The World of Self. This is, next to God, the largest of the boundless worlds. "Know thyself"; thy powers and weaknesses; thy solemn responsibilities; the potencies of good and evil within thee; thy kinship with dust, thy Kingship before God.

> "O soul of man,
> Where'er thou art, or low or high,
> Thy skyey arches with exulting span
> O'er-roof infinity!"

These are the worlds, waving with harvests and rich in mines of virgin gold, that invite the seeker after truth.

But there are Barriers: and none but freebooters will refuse to honor the chart. Let us take heed, adventurous friends, lest as we joyously pass out between the Pillars of Hercules we become mere rovers of the sea. "Be bold; be bold; be not too bold."

There are certain limitations of thought which must be regarded. "What, then, am I not free?" Aye, but of all things in heaven or earth, freedom is most circumscribed. What is freedom? Lawlessness? Not so; it is perfect obedience to perfect law.

The freedom of the thinker is over all the thoroughfares of truth, over all the King's highways. Error is wandering. He is the freeman whom the truth makes free. He is emancipated not only from the bonds of ignorance but from the power of foolish fears; and, pursuing truth, he enters at length into a divine Res-publica, a large and wealthy place called

in an Old Book, "the glorious liberty of the children of God." To venture beyond the province of a sincere and loyal quest of truth is not courage but foolhardiness.

> " . . . Prythee, peace!
> I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares do more is none."

What are the limitations, then, to which the progressive thinker must give heed?

First: the postulate that God is wiser than man. Canst thou by searching find him out? It is his glory to conceal a thing. Can it be thought that the Infinite will unbosom himself to a finite mind? Canst thou measure the seas in the hollow of thy hand? We must expect to be baffled. We must be willing to face the sphinx; willing to consent that God shall be God.

Second: forasmuch as God is truth—its center, its fountain, itself—whosoever would discover truth must look God-ward. In His light only can we see light. This holds in material as in spiritual things. Coleridge was as a blind man in Chamouni until he heard the torrents and the ice-plains; saw the flowers, the eagles and the lightnings; discerned the signs and wonders of the elements—all echoing God. The heart of science is theology. What a hand is this, holding the hand of the Seeker-after-truth! Is it not the part of supreme folly to refuse it?

> "Lead, kindly Light, lead thou me on!"

Third: there are fundamental facts which must be taken for granted. There are axioms of science written on the heavens, on the rocks and blades of grass. There are axioms of philosophy, intuitions,

written on the tablets of the universal soul. There are axioms of spiritual truth written in the pages of the revealed Word; all of them bearing the sign manual, "Thus saith the Lord." There is no getting behind these. A student of geometry never dreams of demonstrating that "Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other." Some things must be taken for granted or we have no outset. When a Truth-seeker tries to prove God, eternity, immortality, it is little wonder that he finds himself in wandering mazes lost.

These are the barriers, then, and within them we pursue our quest. Frank, resolute, adventurous, we find illimitable worlds before us.

II. We have observed that the Truth-seeker must be a pioneer; he must moreover be *a Dogmatist;* or shall we capture a word from the enemy and say "Positivist"? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself to the battle? These are times when gases are condensed into crystals; life is too eager, eventful and converged, for aught but Yea and Amen.

Why do men prate against creeds? What is a "creed?" A system of religious principles; as necessary to a serious life as political principles are in the forum or rules of business in the market-place. What is a creed? A system of truth condensed; a diamond among the charcoals. It is impossible to think well without formulating thought. The axioms from which we proceed are all dogmas. If you are a Gnostic, then you dogmatize in that you say, "We know." But suppose you are an Agnostic; then your philosophy is based upon the obverse dogma,

"We cannot know." Or, it may be, you journey midway along the golden mean of Faith; you are a dogmatist still; for you say, "God knows."

All great thinkers have held tenaciously to the fundamentals. "Had Athanasius or Augustine quietly surrendered the vital doctrines for which they contended, the dark shadow of Arius or Pelagius would be thrown over the world to-day." It is incumbent, therefore, on sensible people to stand by the landmarks of truth.

Here is the statement: "I believe." Let us analyze it. "I." Why not *we?* Because all true progress is toward a more clearly defined individualism. Each for himself. The Orientals say *pisteuomen*, "we believe;" the Occidentals say *credo*, "I believe." And just there is the divergence, political as well as religious, between the eastern and western races; it is the difference between *we* and *I*. In the Orient the conservative clutch of Kingcraft holds the people *en masse;* in the west we have anatomy, cleavage—the crowd is painted with a pre-Raphaelite regard for detail, so that each face stands out. And the world is moving westward. The ego will not be overlooked.

In the ninth volume of Bancroft's *United States* we come upon this passage: "The most stupendous thought that ever was conceived by man, such as had never been dared by Socrates or the Academy, by Aristotle or the Stoics, took possession of Descartes in his meditations on a November night on the banks of the Danube. His mind separated itself from everything besides, and, in the consciousness of its own freedom, stood over against tradition, all

received opinion, all knowledge, all existence except itself, thus asserting the principle of Individuality as the key-note of all coming philosophy and political institutions. Nothing was to be received as truth by man which did not convince his reason. A new world was opened up in which every man was to be his own philosopher."

And that is the world we are living in. The first and greatest commandment is, Think; think for yourself; let no man do your thinking for you. There are people to-day as in Cowper's time, who farm out their thinking;

> "Crooked or straight, through quags or thorny dells
> True to the tinkling of their leaders' bells."

But, friends, by the divine franchise of your manhood, let no man, or body of men, no priest, caucus or sanhedrin do your thinking for you. Quit you like men!

They tell us that the pulpit has lost influence in these days. Say rather it has lost authority; for its influence waxes as its authority wanes. The same is true of all professions. Physicians are losing authority; they can no longer delude men, as they did in the time of Rome, with "simples out of green earthen pots," since patients read their prescriptions on the way to the apothecary's. The press is losing authority; men no longer con their newspapers with a blindfold judgment. They keep up a serious thinking while they read, and draw their own conclusions. And this is incomparably better than the former way. Would I not rather preach to thinking men who can apply to every statement an acid test? It is a glorious thing to be a teacher now. A fore-

man of skilled artisans may have a juster pride in his vocation than the most exalted taskmaster in Pharaoh's brick-kilns; for he is a leader among men.

I "*believe*"; that is, I have gotten hold of certain important truths whereof I may say, These things I know and live by! It is not enough that we should be investigators. "Did the Almighty," said Lessing, "holding in his right hand *Truth*, and in his left hand *Search after Truth*, deign to tender me the one I might prefer, in all humility but without hesitation, I should request *Search after Truth.*" On that a recent reviewer says, "We do not always remember that these exulting pinions droop at last, and that a philosophy of nescience is the end of it. Good hunting and no game taken is a sorry jest. The savor of the venison is needed to stir us to repeat the chase."

There is indeed a pleasure in pursuing, but there is a sweeter and intenser one in having. Every such conquest is a substantial addition to our manhood. We are stronger for it; as the savage chief imagines that the strength of those he conquers passes into him. If we are ever to be forceful thinkers it must come about not only by loving truth as an objective thing, but by making it ours. If we are going to uplift the world we must have a *pou-sto*, a place for the fulcrum. Guesses will not answer; dreams, speculations, perhapses, will not do. A rising inflection cuts the sinews of truth. I must have a rock for my feet and two strong pillars for my hands. The rock is the Divine Word; the two pillars, like Jachin and Boaz, are Faith and Reason. Thus based and buttressed I shall never be moved. I am now in a position to dogmatize. I cannot do otherwise, since

my postulates are beyond an if. I cannot say "peradventure"; I can only say "Verily, verily." This is dogmatism, certainly; but it is the dogmatism of downright truth, of straightforward honesty.

III. But the Truth-seeker, in sympathy with progress, must also be *a Liberal.* He must be logical enough to allow every other man to dogmatize, as well as he. There is a notion abroad that "liberalism" consists only with a sort of moral vacuity or absence of conviction. A man is understood to be liberal when he says, "My views are mere opinions; so are yours; rather than quarrel, let us give them up." Is that it? God forbid! True liberalism speaks on this wise, "I have convictions; so have you; we differ; let us clasp hands and agree to differ!" Thus we keep our brotherhood without losing our manhood, which I conceive to be the better way.

It is puerile to hold that a man must be either a sceptic or an agnostic in order to keep on good terms with his neighbors. The most important of the intellectual achievements of our time is the discovery of the liberalism of true dogmatism; that is, that men must not be expected to agree, but can agree to differ. "Ye be brethren; see that ye fall not out by the way."

Men of broad culture and firm convictions are always liberal; it is the small men, the dilettanti, who must be either skeptical or belligerent. The more a man knows the more willing he is to credit other men with knowing something. The true Truth-seeker propagates his opinions not by "apostolic blows and knocks," but by the use of the expulsive power of truth. This is the genuine Baconian method. "A

little learning is a dangerous thing." Ignorant men are credulous; half-learned men are sophomoric; but those who drink deeply of the Pierian spring are magnanimously tenacious of their opinions; they speak with authority because they have seen truth and handled it. All but five of the signers of the Magna Charta, the original but crude symbol of civil and ecclesiastical freedom,—which ignored the people, indicating only baronial rights—affixed their names with a cross. All but ten of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, which sets forth human equality at its uttermost, were university-bred men, so large-minded as to be at once dogmatic and tolerant—tolerant enough to say dogmatically, "All men are created free and equal and with certain inalienable rights." It is such sterling convictions as these that make broad men. "I confess to you, my daughter," wrote Comte, "that my philosophy dries up my heart."

I commend to you, therefore, the excellency of that word *Credo*. Believe something; believe as much as you can. We must find *terra firma*, somehow. If doubt be ever good, it is only good as something to move away from; a stepping-stone to truth.

IV. I have said the Truth-seeker of to-day must be a Pioneer, a Dogmatist and a Liberal; but more; he must be *a Philanthropist;* as Heine says, "Not a dreamer among the shadows, but a man among men." For ours is a utilitarian age. We are done with apologetics; we have to do now with dynamics. Above all a man must be practical. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Of what avails your hoarded lore,
Your mimic lispings of Hellenic song,
If they awake not in the soul
Sweet thoughts that sing and soar,
And echoes brave that roll
With glad resoundings; stir the sluggish heart
To raptured sympathy,
And rash resolves that hotly start
And on enchanted ladders climb
To monumental deeds?

What is your learning good for? Can silver held in solution buy bread for the hungry? It must first be precipitated, moulded, and stamped with the superscription of the king. No knowledge is worth the getting which cannot thus be paid out, *quid pro quo*. Locke said, "The business of education is not to perfect a learner in all the sciences, but to give him such knowledge as he shall stand in need of during the course of common life." Lord Bacon said, "Crafty men condemn studies; simple men admire them; wise men use them." In other words, the only true science is applied science.

I have a belief; but the question is, what is my creed good for? What is its fruitage in my walk and conversation? Some say the Saxon origin of "belief" is "*by-lifian*," that is, what we live by. The only creed worth having is one with a heart to pity and hands to help.

The cloisters are in ruins. The Truth-seeker of our time walks along the busy thoroughfares. In the Feudal Ages, when the people were perishing of spiritual hunger, the scholars and divines dwelt in monasteries, poring over old parchments, illuminating missals and breviaries; or, if they came forth,

it was but to speculate about the feathers in an angel's wing, or to soar aimlessly through the ether of "free-will, fixed fate, foreknowledge absolute." The age will have no more of this. It wants vital truth; Jacob's fare for his journey—dates and parched corn.

The Thinker is called on to make his influence felt, manfully, in the strenuous world. His name, Abou ben Adhem, is writ large in a book of gold, as "one who loves his fellow men." Culture has not always been philanthropic. The educated Spartan was one who could hurl the discus skilfully. The educated Athenian was one whose faculties were ground to a fine edge on syllogisms and rhetorical technicalities. The educated Persian was a carver of colossal maxims out of cold granite. No room for a heart anywhere! But the man of liberal accomplishments in these days must needs be a Philanthropist. His culture begins at the heart and works outwardly, through eyes and hands and feet.

Self-culture is not ultimate. There is, indeed, an intense pleasure in study for study's sake. "Not more sublimely sweeps an eagle around a lofty mountain-peak, hovering, as if intoxicated with delight, over the vast abyss below, than circles the excited soul of a noble thinker, in the full equipoise of all its powers when in their highest state of exaltation, around the loftiest summits of truth that are visible to mortal eyes." But, if this be all, what more or better is it than the passion of the horse-leech?

> ". . . Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!"

Some one has said, "Diffusiveness is the genius of

Christianity." Paul puts it thus: "But to do good and to communicate, forget not." No man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself. He that would be greatest, in the kingdom of thought as in the kingdom of faith, let him be servant of all.

But there is something higher than Philanthropy, to wit, The fountain of it. "Let us love one another, for love is of God." Our creed must express itself in piety. The progressive Truth-seeker does not wholly magnify his office unless his mind is open upward to the Father of Lights. His name is Theophilus; and God is in all his thoughts. There are dreamers about us who say like Laplace, "Congratulate me, I have left God out of my philosophy." Left God out! Why, friend, what is your sun-dial good for if it stands in perpetual shadow?

Will you have astronomy without God? No voice from the singing spheres; no sweet influences of the Pleiades or golden-lipped preaching of Arcturus and his sons! Surely, "the undevout astronomer is mad." Geology without God? Nay, his footprints are impressed on every ledge of the everlasting hills! Botany without God? when every grass blade is a living epistle of his glory and every blossom a censer full of incense swinging at his altar? History without God? Who then is the architect of your temple? Or Life without God? Nay, its chief end is to glorify Him. "Wist ye not," said the Ideal Man, "that I must be about my Father's business?"

V. Thus, finally, the Truth-seeker must be a *Man of God.* He must believe in him, know him, adore and love him.

But how shall he become acquainted with God? Through his Word, which is the revelation of his mind and will. Blessed be his name for the old-fashioned Book! Better far be one of those humble folk who "just know, and know no more, their Bible true" than the wisest of the philosophers who renounce and deride it. The Mohammedan bases all his culture on the Koran; the Hindu on the Vedas. Their thought is right. What shall justly displace or supplant God's Oracles in the curriculum of a Christian civilization. Lighthouses are no better than reefs, if their lights are gone out. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Thus the Truth-seeker is equipped for life and duty. It was a sad reproach that Jesus administered to the instructors of his time, who had removed the Scriptures to make way for traditions of men; "Ye have," he said, "taken away the key of knowledge." This Bible is the key that opens the cabinet of truth. "Tolle, lege!" said the angel to Augustine. "Search the Scriptures," said the Truth himself; "for these are they which testify of me."

Thus the two revelations are at one; the Word written and the Word Incarnate. Each is complementary to the other. Christ walks through the pages of Scripture, a life-giving Presence, from Genesis to Finis. We sit as disciples before his feet. Very God! The only perfect Man! To walk in his footsteps, doing good, is our noblest ambition; to perpetuate his beneficence among men is God's sublimest

purpose with us; "to make manifest," as Paul says, borrowing a figure from the custom of scattering perfumes from a triumphal chariot, "to make manifest through us the savor of his knowledge in every place."

Thus we complete our survey of the Quest of Truth—the noblest aim in life. Ben Jonson wrote:

> "Upon her head she wears a crown of stars,
> Through which her Orient hair waves to her waist,
> By which believing mortals hold her fast,
> And in those golden cords are carried even
> Till with her breath she blows them up to heaven."

Let us remember that, through all the years, we are never more than prentice hands. This that we call living is not life. We stand for a little, as on the threshold, knocking, waiting, till by the fairest of angels, a door is opened and the glory streams forth upon us. Thus at length we enter into life.

Our search for wisdom ends in the presence of Him who said, "I am the truth." Wise men follow the star to Bethlehem, and no farther. To reject Christ is to choose the way of Pilate, who scornfully protested, "What is truth?" To accept Him is to journey in the path that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Here we see through a glass darkly, but there face to face. "And we all with open face beholding, as in a glass the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord"

STANDARDS OF MEASUREMENT

"But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."—2 Cor. 10, 12.

The reference is to a coterie of self-righteous people in the Corinthian church who found much in themselves to admire and little in others. They had characterized Paul as a mere letter-writer, twitting him on his physical weakness and stammering speech. His reply was dignified and courteous, though sharpened here and there to a fine edge, as in the portion before us; "We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." The fault here referred to, namely, the use of false standards in moral mensuration, is one prevalent in every age.

An authoritative standard is needed for our guidance in every department of life. In the present political campaign there is an apparent difference of opinion between the two dominant parties as to the advantage of having a single standard of currency: that this difference, however, is merely superficial, appears from the fact that those who argue in the negative still insist upon a fixed ratio of sixteen to one.

An artist adjusts his methods to the canons of his art; the musician follows his score; the sailor consults his chart and compass; the soldier obeys the rules of service and practices the manual of arms; the tailor cuts by his fashion-sheet; a merchant weighs in balances adjusted to an invariable pound; the farmer plants and ploughs by the signs of the Zodiac; the lawyer conducts his case according to his digest; the politician appeals to such historic symbols as Magna Charta and the Constitution; aye, even the gravedigger is obedient to rule and plumbline. It is obvious then, that a just standard of measurement, so necessary in common pursuits, is indispensable in the larger province of moral and spiritual affairs. We cannot play fast and loose in things that involve our destiny to endless ages.

I. Let us begin at the beginning, with *our conception of God.* This lies at the foundation of all. Theology is the science of all sciences. We cannot live, labor, believe or achieve without God. All men are searching for him. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

But what is the usual method of procedure? The heathen make to themselves gods after their own likeness. Isaiah describes the process: "The carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he marketh it out with a line, he fitteth it with planes, he marketh it out with a compass and maketh it *after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man.* He falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it and prayeth unto it, saying, 'Deliver me, for thou art my god!'" And even though the image be not made after the simili-

tude of a man, it is endowed with human attributes. Thus bugs and beasts and inanimate things, Nilus, the crocodile and holy scarabæus, are made to deport themselves like men.

The Pantheon of Rome was constructed after the same method. Olympus was peopled by a company of very human gods. Venus was a drab, Mercury a common thief, Jupiter and Juno, parents of the divine assemblage, were no better than they ought to be; all were but colossal men and women, endowed with splendid virtues and magnificent vices. The revels of the Olympiad were like those of patrician Rome; the merrymakers being mere mortals projected on the skies.

Here is the universal tendency. We, living at the high noon of Gospel light and privilege, are still inclined to fashion gods after our own dimensions. Nor is this unnatural. The sun shines for all; but nothing fully absorbs it. To some things its light rays are welcome, to others its heat rays, to others still its actinic rays. To the regions of darkness, the sun is light; to the frozen soil, it is heat; to animated nature, it is energy. In like manner we are all disposed to receive so much of the true conception of God as suits us. The Puritans believed in him as an apotheosis of justice; the merryhearted Frenchmen as *le Bon Dieu*, who would not crush a fly to save a world; while to the devout mystic he is ineffable Holiness. The result is infinite variety; when, in point of fact, there can be but a single God. The universe has room for only one, since he filieth all in all.

It is clear, therefore, that our method of measure-

ment is wrong. A traveller on the summit of the Alps, in the early morning, sees what seems to be a mighty specter moving along the tops of the distant hills: it is, indeed, only his shadow thrown upon the clouds. Not so can men find God. He is more than a reflection of ourselves; he cannot be measured by any comparing of ourselves among ourselves. His thoughts are not as our thoughts; his ways are not as our ways. Hence his reproof, "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thou art."

Is there, then, a better way? Not unless God shall reveal himself. Has he done so? It is claimed that he has, in his Word. The plain duty of every man is, therefore, to satisfy himself whether or no the Scriptures are the veritable Word of God, and, if so, to accept Him, without demur, as he has made himself manifest in them.

The prayer of Moses was that he might behold the divine glory. And the Lord said, "Behold, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." It is thus and thus only that men see God. They must be willing to hide themselves, to put away all mental bias and prejudice and take Him precisely at his word. Only so shall we get a rounded and symmetrical view of the one true God.

II. A similar instance of wrong measurement may be seen in *our conception of the Ideal Man.* Such an ideal is necessary, in order that we may know character and have something to live up to.

One method of procedure is by combination. It was thus that Plato secured the outlines of his

Dikaios, or "just man." But, obviously, a composite photograph can produce, not the perfect, but only an average man.

Or we may formulate an ideal by selection. This is the common way. There is probably not one among us who has not in mind some noble personage, a dear father or mother perhaps, who serves as our exemplar. But this course is open to the objection that it leads inevitably to either discouragement or self-righteousness. If my model be such an one as John Howard or Wilberforce, or the saintly McCheyne or Rutherford, I am sure to be overwhelmed by despair in my vain effort to emulate him. On the other hand if I select one whose character is inferior to mine, I am bound to form an exaggerated estimate of my own virtues. It is a proverb that "the one-eyed is easily king among the blind." Thus the Pharisee prayed in himself; "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are! I thank thee that I am not an extortioner, or an adulterer, like my neighbor so-and-so! I thank thee that I am not even as this publican!" By this sort of measurement we gain the comfort of an extreme self-satisfaction; for, indeed, there is only one man in the world who cannot truthfully say that he is better than some other man.

And for such self-satisfaction there is no ground in reason. Let Sydney Smith speak: "Behold the proud man; creature of a span high, stalking through infinite space in all the grandeur of littleness! Perched on a speck of the universe, every wind of heaven strikes into his blood the coldness of death; his soul floats from his body like melody from the string; day and night, as dust on the wheel, he is

rolled along the heavens, through a labyrinth of worlds, and all the creations of God are flaming above and beneath him. Is this a creature to make himself a crown of glory, to deny his own flesh and mock at his fellow?"

A grievous error; and it is due wholly to wrong measurement. Other men's failures can never save us, and other men's successes should never appal us. Nor will they when we find the just standard by which to weigh and measure ourselves aright. I shall never know myself by comparison with others, nor by contrasting myself to-day with myself yesterday. Where then is the true standard? Is there anywhere an Ideal Man?

Yes: it has pleased God to reveal a Perfect One. In the Man of Nazareth we behold the perfection of manhood. Ecce Homo! There is no guile in his heart; there is no guile on his lips. Who layeth anything to his charge? He stands solitary and alone; the incomparable One.

He who measures himself by the stature of Jesus might well despair, were it not for the fact that this Son of Man is also Son of God and our Saviour. He came to live; that is, to show among men what character is and what a man ought to be. But he came to die, also; and, by the power of his death, he blots out the sin of shortcoming on the part of all who sincerely try to follow him.

And here, as Paul says, "there is no difference; we all come short." No man lives up to the standard; but if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father even Jesus Christ the righteous. And in our life of earnest effort we, slipping and stumbling along

our path, still come nearer day by day to the stature of this perfect Man. In our purpose to emulate his virtues, we are already sons of God; "and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

III. We turn now to a consideration of *the true standard of right and wrong.* The average man is inclined to do right, but he must have a reliable rule of conduct. Where shall he find it?

Can tradition afford such a rule? Is it enough for a man to do as his fathers did before him? The rule of heredity, when brought into the sphere of ethics, becomes an adamantine chain. There is many an inebriate who justifies his shame on the ground that a strain of alcoholism runs in his veins. Let him take his father's decanter off his own sideboard, and fight an up-to-date battle on the ground of personal responsibility, and the Lord will befriend him. Every man must answer for his own life before God.

Is it safe, then, to follow fashion? Shall we do as others do and go with the multitude to do evil? Fashion is a fallacious rule, in that it shifts with shifting time and circumstance. There are some portions of Switzerland where goitres are so much in fashion that a man who has not such an excrescence is called "goose-necked." One is sure to go wrong who follows the precept, "When you are in Paris, do as Parisians do."

Or shall we follow conscience? If we cannot find a standard by "comparing ourselves with ourselves," shall we find it within ourselves? Nay; it is not enough to be "a conscientious man;" since conscience may be seared by habit as with an hot iron.

It may be twisted out of its normal direction, as the magnetic needle is deflected by the iron in the ship's hull. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the Christians "in all good conscience." Philip the Second followed his conscience in expressing a desire to ride up to the bridle in Protestant blood. It is not enough, therefore, to follow the inward voice.

One of the shibboleths of our present political campaign is, "Vote as you pray." This also is fallacious. Men may pray wrong and often do; the wish being father to the thought. In the War of the Rebellion there were praying men on both sides; but there was only one right side to either pray or fight on. Our prayers are the natural expression of desire. "We know not what to pray for as we ought." It is the business of a good citizen not to vote as he prays; but to pray right and to vote right, as well.

Where is the standard, then? In the Word of God. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." One of the offices of the Holy Spirit is to regulate the conscience. The object of prayer is to arrive at that which conscience cannot give, to wit, a clear expression of the mind of God. Let us live, labor and vote not as we pray, but as God, in answer to prayer, enjoins us. Let us adjust our lives not to the requirements of conscience, but to the divine law, as God through conscience shall communicate it. His word is ultimate; and he is always ready to speak to him who is willing to hear.

IV. We have yet to consider *the Rule of Service*. All right-thinking men and women are desirous of

making the world a better place to live in. We hear the cry for help on every hand. How shall we answer it? What can we do for the army of tramps; for the idle and ignorant; for the sick, the weak-minded, the prisoner; for widows and fatherless?

We get together in Sociological Conventions. We collect statistics, compare communities, and measure ourselves among ourselves. We plan to build schools and hospitals and reformatories. We call for soup-kitchens, employment bureaus, art exhibits, entertainments, university settlements. So far, so good; but all this falls infinitely short of the requirements of the situation. Our measurement of the case is narrow and superficial. We are treating man purely as an animal. We are estimating his needs by the cry of our fleshly appetites. He is hungry, let us feed him! He shivers, let us clothe him! He does not know a chromo from a masterpiece of Raphæl; let us cultivate his æsthetic nature! Is man no more then, than a stomach and the appurtenances thereunto? Is the problem of his welfare to be solved by the argument of a full dinner pail and an empty coal scuttle? Is physical comfort here and now the sum total of happiness?

God be praised for all that is being done to alleviate the present sufferings of the poor and distressed; but the Epicurean tendency of current sociological effort is greatly to be deplored. We blame the sickly sentimentalism of women who carry jellies and nosegays to Murderers' Row; but what better is this, to supply the present needs of the suffering and ignore the profounder needs of their spiritual natures?

"Let us eat and drink," said Epicurus, "for to-morrow we die."

But we do not die to-morrow; we live forever. Man is more than an animal; he is a son of God. He was created in the divine likeness, and has before him the possibility of a divine heritage. His life here is but an handbreadth; and, however sore his afflictions may be, they "endure but for a moment"; while his life hereafter stretches on through the boundless æons of eternity.

We err, therefore, in measuring immortal needs by physical standards. We err in seeking to meet an eternal need by betterment of temporal conditions. Man is indeed an animal; and when he hungers he must eat and when he shivers he must be clothed. But we need to get eternity into the reckoning. Our philosophy must take in the endless outlook; "for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his life?"

Is there anywhere a perfect standard of such comprehensive humanity,—a standard by which we may measure our efforts to do good as we have opportunity unto all men? Is there a deed anywhere in history by which all other deeds may be measured?

Aye; the Cross of Christ. Here is the standard of philanthropy. The Cross stands out in history as a divine announcement of the true plan for the deliverance of the whole man. It saves the soul by blotting out sin. It thus disinfects the memory of the past; and it glorifies the future by preparing the soul to meet God. And it saves the body, as well. The man who finds salvation in Christ is certain to set out upon a holy endeavor to quit himself like a

man. Bring him to Calvary, and you insure his temporal as well as his spiritual good. He is no longer content with base pursuits and companionships; he is ashamed of his rags, and covets a place to earn an honest livelihood. His whole life is revolutionized by a vital apprehension of the Gospel of Christ.

If these things are true, any effort to solve the social problem without Christ, is like undertaking to build a house from the chimney down.

It is a small matter to feed a man who is doomed to the gallows. It is scarcely worth while to give Esau a mess of pottage while allowing his birthright to go by default. An artist, desiring to paint a picture of the Prodigal's Return, engaged a tramp to sit as his model. The next day at the appointed hour the man appeared dressed in his best. His appearance was improved but, in fact, he was more worthless than ever, being unfitted even to serve as a model for the prodigal. It is proposed by those who are engaged in philanthropic effort, in some quarters, to treat all prodigal sons in this way; to furnish them with soap and water, a change of clothes and something to eat, and leave them in the far country. No! No! Get your prodigal into a mood to return to his Father's house; once there, he shall have clothes and food in plenty, sitting at his Father's table and wearing the best robe. This is the method of the philanthropic Christ. He healed the sick and alleviated the miseries of the poor and suffering, always pointing them to the higher life of reconciliation with God. The mind that was in Christ Jesus should be also in us.

Hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter: Self must be eliminated from our moral judgments. Let us cease measuring ourselves by ourselves and comparing ourselves among ourselves. The sculptor who carved his name upon an inner fold of the garment of Athens was condemned to die for his presumption. Self must not be obtruded into our estimates of spiritual things. We must get back to God, to his revelation of himself, to his conception of manhood as set forth in the ideal Man, to the rule of ethics contained in his perfect law, to the pattern of philanthropy set for us in the heroic self-sacrifice of the cross. Back to God! When he speaks let every man stand with finger on lip. His word is ultimate. All standards are wrong except such as proceed from him. If we would win an ultimate success in the great business of life, we must weigh all things in the golden balances of the sanctuary, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

BUSINESS

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke 2, 49.

There is a familiar proverb, "Business is business," which I suppose is another way of saying that Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well. A man without an occupation is a cumberer of the ground; he is, as somebody has observed, "no better than a dead man and takes up more room."

It was an appropriate inquiry which Pharaoh, looking to the welfare of his kingdom, propounded to Jacob and his family on their entrance into Egypt; "What is your occupation?" And it was fortunate for them that they were able to give a categorical answer: "Thy servants are shepherds."

It is probable that Jonah would not have fared so ill at the hands of the Phœnician sailors had he been able to give a straightforward answer to their question, "What is thine occupation?" Poor prophet, recreant to duty! he could only say evasively, "I am an Hebrew and I fear Jehovah." He had unfortunately, just then, nothing to do.

If the Man of Nazareth had been asked, "What is your business?" though the implements of his craft were on the bench before him and chips and shavings around his feet, he would not have said,

"My business is carpentry"; but rather, "I am indeed a carpenter by trade, but this is merely incidental to my great purpose. *My business* is to finish the work which my Father has given me to do, namely, to save the world from sin."

And the Christian should be able to speak after the same manner. It goes without saying that he has a trade or profession of some sort by which he earns an honest livelihood, but whether he be merchant or blacksmith, artist or counselor, butcher or baker or candlestick-maker, in every case he must still be ready to say, "My business is to coöperate with God in his great enterprise of salvation"; for did not his Lord and Master say, "As the Father hath sent me into the world, so send I you"? This was the purport of William Carey's reply to Sydney Smith, who spoke of him derisively as a "consecrated cobbler." "I cobble shoes for a living," said he, "but my business is to serve Christ as a fisher of men."

If this, then, is our real occupation, as followers of Jesus Christ, it is obvious that, in order to success and ultimate reward, we should address ourselves to it in a business-like way. And two things are necessary at the outset: First, *we should understand the relation of this concern to other affairs.* It must take preëminence and precedence of all. It is recorded that when Jesus told his parents that he must be about his Father's business, "they understood not." Alas, it is difficult for any of us to apprehend this fact, that the service of the Kingdom is beyond and above all bread-and-butter work. We invest the sum and substance of our time and energy in secular

affairs, and put God off with what Shakespeare calls "our superflux." We tire ourselves out in secular labor, and excuse ourselves from the larger duties of the spiritual life on the ground of weariness. But crippled lambs and yoke-worn bullocks are not for God's altar. The injunction is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all necessary things will be added unto you."

The other prerequisite to success in religious work is *an understanding of our personal relation to the Kingdom.* We have much to say about the Church ; the poor, backsliding Church ; the indolent, recreant Church. O let the church alone and look to yourself! The Church is only what you and I and its other members make it. The great difficulty is to detach the *ego* from the *mass.* There is gold enough in the Klondike to enrich all seekers, but to get one's individual portion out of the hills, *hoc opus, hic labor est!* We are too willing to serve the Lord by proxy. A student in the Theological Seminary at Andover, having purchased a cord of wood, came to Moses Stuart to inquire whom he could get to saw it. The old professor said, "I happen to be out of a job of that sort just now; I'll saw it for you." A man who would succeed in husbandry must hold his own plough-handles. The Christian who cares for his Master's "Well done," should give his personal attention to the work assigned to him. You cannot farm out your responsibility to the minister and elders. The shibboleth by which the Church will conquer the world is, "All at it, always at it, altogether at it."

Now, with a clear understanding of the relation

of our spiritual work to all other pursuits, and of our individual relation to that work, it remains to apply certain rules and precepts which are familiar in the common affairs of life. For the Lord's business is no less business than any other. And, I repeat, if we are to succeed in this business, it will be because we address ourselves to it in a business-like way. Let us, then, observe the maxims which apply in common industry.

First.—Be prompt. At the ringing of the bell in a factory village, the streets are full of operatives, all expecting to be in their place as a matter of course, at the instant when the power is turned on. How is it when the church bell rings? Are the servants of Christ, who profess to be working for an incorruptible crown, as prompt to heed the summons as those who labor for a day's paltry wage? Alas, an overcast sky will oftentimes keep an able-bodied man from attendance upon the house of God! The difficulty of obtaining a quorum in the meetings of Missionary Boards or Committees on Religious Work is proverbial. There is no such difficulty in securing a quorum of Bank Directors or members of a political junta. There is always a quorum in the workshop, always a quorum in the army or the jury-room. There the necessity of promptness is recognized. But why not in the church? Is "the glorious liberty of the children of God," a mere license to go as one pleases? Why should the Sunday-school teacher play fast and loose with his responsibility? Why should the prayer-meeting be so thinly attended? Why should the mood of the secular world be so Imperative and that of the religious world so Subjunctive? Surely this is not "business."

Second.—Be Enthusiastic. The men who win in the market-place are those who are in dead earnest. Let the Christian be half as eager in the affairs of the Kingdom as are brokers and politicians in their business, and he is sure to be called a fanatic. But what then? Was it not written of Christ, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up?" On one occasion his disciples, returning from the city of Sychar, where they had gone to buy food, found him speaking with a woman of the town concerning the welfare of her soul; and when they said, "Master, eat," he replied, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." He is the best Christian who, in his enthusiasm for service, can thus forget even the pangs of hunger. So earnestly did Paul, loaded with chains in the judgment hall of Cæsarea, press the claims of the gospel upon his judges, that Festus was moved to cry with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad!" Unfortunately such madness is rare among Christian people. We profess to believe that sinners without Christ are in danger of hell, and yet how indifferent we are! Is it strange that the world doubts our sincerity? We are appointed to be fishers of men; but good fishermen do not sit idling on the shore when the call is heard, "Let down your nets!" This also is not "business."

Third.—Be in Haste. The King's business requireth haste. In the time of Henry VIII. all letters bore the picture of a post-boy swinging from a gallows-tree, with the legend, "Haste, Post, haste for thy life!" We are appointed to carry a message of tremendous import, and there is no excuse for

loitering by the way. On the last visit of Mr. Moody to London, there were among his converts two brothers who, having found the Way, immediately consulted as to a third brother in Queenstown. To him they forthwith despatched a message : "Come at once ; business of great importance." And when he came, they gave him no peace until he also had accepted the overtures of God's mercy. This is "business."

Fourth.—Be Deliberate. Deliberation is quite consistent with haste. John Wesley was accustomed to say, "Let me be ever in haste but never in a hurry." We may learn a lesson from our Fire Department. With what desperate speed the great horses plunge along our thoroughfares to answer the alarm ; but, once at their destination, how careful the firemen are in adjusting the hose and placing the ladders. No time is lost, but there is no precipitation. Property is in danger, lives are at stake : all the more need for carefulness.

Take time to pray, my friend. Let no complication of duties at the shop or office tempt you to slight the summons of the mercy-seat. Take time to read your Bible, and study it. Take time to get ready, prayerfully, carefully, for every duty. Our Lord lived at Nazareth in such retirement for thirty years that we have but a single glimpse into that formative period of his life, and then, at twelve years of age, we find him saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He patiently toiled on, in his carpenter shop, waiting for the fulness of time. We gain nothing by impetuosity. The matter in hand is of such importance that, while wasting no

time and losing no opportunity, we can afford to be accurate, deliberate, patient. This is "business"; and success is the guerdon of those who proceed in this way.

Fifth.—Be Practical. Voltaire said of his friend, LaHarpe, "He is like an oven, always hot and never cooking anything." A castle in the air is a poor dwelling and a still poorer shop. We dream dreams and see visions and have splendid purposes which we propose to carry out to-morrow; and to-morrow never comes and our hopes and purposes vanish into thin air. Of all things in the world religion should be most practical, since it has to do most closely with the actualities of life. Of all preachers living or dead, none ever used so much of plain common sense as did Jesus Christ in his discourses. Let us imitate him. Do noble things, not dream them all day long.

> "Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute!
> What you can do, or dream you can, begin it."

Sixth.—Be Progressive. It is a familiar saying that a successful man is never satisfied. He stretches out Briarean hands for more. The last man in the world to be satisfied should be the follower of Christ; there is so much before him. Such vast possibilities of spiritual growth! So many open doors for service! So far to go before he reaches the end of life's noble purpose and aspiration. Wherefore let him see that each day is a day of progress.

> "Count that day lost whose low descending sun,
> Views from thy hand no worthy action done."

Add! Add! "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." Keep adding ever ; for to him that hath, shall be given. Do the next thing better than the last, since practice makes perfect. Aim at promotion; for while there is much jostling among *minimum* Christians, there is abundance of room at the top. Be faithful in the least, hoping for the sovereignty of ten cities. The Rabbis say that an angel came to Methuselah, commanding him to build an house for himself, since he had five hundred years to live : to which he answered, "If I am to live only five hundred years, it is scarcely worth while to build me a house." Alas, that so many of us should be willing to abide in tents, for lack of ambition to build better. Move on, my friend ; move up in the Christian life. Be a better man to-morrow than to-day.

Seventh and finally.—Be Persistent. Hold on, hold fast, hold out! Let no discouragements dishearten you. Have faith in Christ and in the triumph of his Gospel. We must believe in our work if we would succeed in it. Faith is the mother of patience. When Sir Christopher Wren was a lad, the doctors said he could never live to grow up. But he had conceived the thought of a splendid cathedral. In his young imagination he saw the fabric completed ; its lofty pillars in place, its mighty arches sprung. And he could not die until he had realized his purpose. For thirty-five years his frail body subsisted on hope; and when at length St. Paul's was finished,

he was ready to go. This is to live ; to set one's face steadfastly toward the consummation of high purpose, until one may say, like Christ, "It is finished!" Blessed is the man who can thus conclude his autobiography, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

This is success ; all else is failure. The final reward of faithfulness in this real "business" of life is promotion; that is, more of the Lord's business to do. We enter heaven at the Master's call, "Come up higher! Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Are we worthy ? If a workman in your employ were to leave you to-morrow in search of a better position, he would of a certainty ask you for a "reference," and would deem himself unfortunate if you could not say something to this effect: "*To whom it may concern:* The bearer has served me faithfully and I cordially commend him as a capable, industrious and trustworthy man."

The time is coming when we must all pass from this present sphere of usefulness to another further on. Has our service been such that our Master can count us worthy of promotion to the larger tasks and responsibilities of the heavenly life ? We are indentured to serve him loyally and industriously here and now. The future depends on his commendation. What can he say for us ?

GOOD WORKS

"And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give unto every man according as his work shall be."—Rev. 22, 12.

The early Christians, in the midst of constant danger and suffering, were sustained by the hope of Christ's return to reign in righteousness. Their morning salutation was "Maranatha! Our Lord cometh!" It is natural, perhaps, that in these piping times of peace, less emphasis should be placed upon this truth; but blessed now and always are those "who love his appearing."

In that day the Lord shall sit upon a throne of judgment and separate the assembled multitude, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. To those on the left hand he will mete out retribution, and to those on the right rewards, "according to the deeds done in the body." Each shall receive "according as his work shall be."

In view of this fact, it is of the utmost importance that we should know what sort of work is esteemed worthy in his sight. It is to be feared that in our aversion to the ceremonial legalism of the Romish Church, we have minimized the importance of good works in the economy of the spiritual life.

In addressing ourselves to this matter we must first have a definition. *What are good works?* Not

such as are wrought in mere conformity to the Moral Law; for though retribution is dealt out for transgression, there is obviously no reward for obedience; since he who obeys perfectly, does only what, in reason, is expected of him (see Luke 17, 10). Nor are good works such as proceed from mere emotion, from sensuous impressions and impulses; else we should confer the service chevron on a tigress that fights to the death in defense of her cubs.

We are not left to frame a definition for ourselves, Christ himself having spoken with authority. "As he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment very precious; and she brake the box and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves and said, 'Wherefore was this waste of the ointment made?' And Jesus said 'Let her alone; why trouble ye her? *She hath wrought a good work on me.*'"

A "good work" then, from the standpoint of Christ, our final Judge and Arbiter, is such as has for its motive a sincere devotion to him. It proceeds from a sense of gratitude for his loving kindness, and it terminates on him. It is wrought "for Jesus' sake." This will be made apparent by a further consideration of certain facts.

I. *We are saved by faith.* This is the testimony of Scripture: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified"; and, *per contra*, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." The faith here referred to is a receptive grace; it is the will reaching forth, like a hand, to receive the proffer of life. At this point no merit is possible on the part of any man.

All are equally undeserving and the best that any can do is to take the cup of salvation and drink it.

On one occasion Jesus said, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth but for that which endureth unto everlasting life": whereupon an inquiry was made, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" to which he replied, "This is the work of God, That ye believe on him whom God hath sent." All other works, such as giving of tithes, penance, pilgrimages, sacrifices, are ineffective. They have no relation to the salvation of the soul. Faith is the sole condition of it.

And reason adds her testimony to that of Scripture. God is not to be thought of as a merchant, that he should sell his wares. He is indeed represented by Isaiah as standing like a huckster at the corner of the streets crying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk!" but, observe, the invitation is to buy "without money and without price." God is a King and, as such, he gives right royally. When Voltaire was at the court of Frederick the Great he was cut down in his allowance of sugar at table, for which he says he indemnified himself by pocketing the wax candles. But then, Frederick "the Great" was notorious for parsimony, being called "the meanest of men." We expect better things than this of kings. And surely, the King of kings has no need of our petty coin: nor does he offer his grace as *quid pro quo.*

One of the ancients said, *Coelum gratis non accipiam*, that is, "I will not take heaven for naught." But, my friend, you will accept life *gratis* or not at all.

God is a great giver, and his unspeakable gift is to be had for the taking. "Long as I live I'll still be crying, Mercy's free!"

This is the fundamental truth of Protestantism: "Justification by Faith." Here ran the line of cleavage in the Reformation. As Luther, clothed still in his monastic garb and weary with a long pilgrimage, was climbing *Sancta Scala* on his knees, he heard a Voice as if from heaven saying, "The just shall live by faith!" He rose to his feet a new man, with the light of a great discovery shining in his eyes. What need of penance, of scourging the body for the sins of the soul, of counting the beads on a rosary, of making long pilgrimages, when faith alone can save?

II. *Nevertheless, faith and works are inseparably joined together;* so inseparably that neither can live without the other; so inseparably that good works are possible to him alone who lives by faith upon the Son of God.

Good works are the outgrowth of faith; as the stalk grows from the seed or the flower from the bud. He who accepts Christ as his Saviour is bound to serve him by the constraint of love. It was such a man who, recently, in my presence, used these words:

> "I would not work my soul to save,
> For that my Lord hath done;
> But I would work like any slave
> For love of God's dear Son."

He did not know that he was echoing the hymn which Xavier wrote under his crucifix:

> "Thou, O my Jesus, thou didst me
> Upon the cross embrace;
> For me didst bear the nails and spear
> And manifold disgrace.

"Should I not serve Thee, Saviour mine,
Should I not serve thee well;
Not for the hope of gaining heaven,
Nor of escaping hell,

Not for the hope of earning aught,
Of gaining a reward,
But freely, fully as Thyself
Hast lovéd me, O Lord?"

Good works are also the evidence of faith. I have no means of knowing that there is machinery in my watch-case except by the motion of the hands around the dial. James says, "*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or a sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*"

In other words faith without works is an impossible hypothesis. Not by the wildest stretch of the

imagination can a mummy be called a man. No more is faith faith, unless it has a beating heart and flashing eyes, lips to speak and hands to do the work of God.

It is good works moreover that give dynamic value to faith. I recently heard a soldier say of General Howard, "We spoke of him as 'the praying General.' For a long time, however, his religion was on trial; until at Chancellorsville he walked before his weary men, under fire, his arm twice broken dangling at his side, calling upon us to fight for our country and be sure that God was with us. Then we believed in him." Thus the world pays tribute to a faith which manifests itself in works. Faith preaches by works; and this is the true preaching of the Gospel.

III. *We note also a vital relation of good works to the happiness of heaven.* It is true that faith alone admits us there, but works assign us to our respective places.

We must not conceive of heaven as a dull and monotonous level of spiritual joy. There are gradations. We read of various ranks of "angels and archangels, principalities and powers and dominions," ranging from the humblest one in the shining host to the great archangel, who stands as prime minister beside the throne. And there are like gradations among the saints triumphant. It is written, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever": and it is also written, "One star differeth from another star in glory."

Heaven is a place of promotion. The diversity among the saints triumphant is not due merely to a

difference of capacity for joy and service, but to a less or greater faithfulness in service here and now. It is true that all laborers in the vineyard are said to receive the same wages, a penny at evening; but a penny is not the same to all. A penny given to a child will open a wellspring of joy, while a sated epicure would scorn it. A penny to a starving man is life, but to Rothschild a mere bagatelle. Thus all who labor for Christ shall receive eternal life as their "penny at evening"; but there are infinite possibilities of variety in the measure of that life.

We are glad to remember that the dying thief was saved *in articulo mortis;* and that, by simple faith and not an hour devoted to the actual service of Christ, he entered Paradise. Blessed be God that mercy is so free! But will any one presume to say that heaven is the same to that penitent thief and to Paul the apostle, who, from the hour of his conversion gave himself no rest in service, but toiled on, suffered on, journeyed on, in perils oft by land and sea, until, worn out in faithfulness, he went to meet his Master, saying, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at that day"? The thief was saved "so as by fire," like a man escaping from a burning house; but Paul entered heaven with "an abundant entrance" and passed on to an assignment of joys and tasks proportioned to his long apprenticeship and faithful service.

The Book of Remembrance which is to be opened at the Great Day, will furnish the basis of a just

system of remuneration. Every man shall receive "according to the things done in the body." Rewards will be distributed according to merit. "Whoso shall give a cup of water to one of Christ's little ones shall in no wise lose his reward." God is a sure paymaster. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." Thus heaven is what we make it. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, They do rest from their labors and their works do follow them." We enter heaven by faith in Christ; but, once there, our place amid the varied joys and services of that celestial realm shall be determined by our record of faithfulness here and now. What solemnity it gives to these passing days to reflect that we are thus building for ourselves an eternal house to dwell in!

In view of the foregoing considerations it is apparent that any one who is desirous of doing good works, must begin by coming to Christ. Not that the life of a Christless man may not be abundant in natural "goodness"; but the work which is meritorious, in its relation to eternal life, is not that which merely conforms to the Moral Law—like the innocence of a graven image—but that which has love for Christ as its motive and Christ himself as its end. All other works are mere ciphers, as to positive merit or remuneration. A thousand ciphers are but naught; but put a unit before them and you make them of incalculable value. Christ is the unit that gives moral value to life.

And having accepted Christ, if we would make the utmost of life, let us keep close to him. He who would raise roses must water the roots. Let us fix our eyes on Calvary until the eye affecteth the heart and the heart affecteth the hands. Let us fix our eyes on Christ and him crucified until our whole life shall be an oblation of gratitude to him who has saved us with his precious blood. "All this for me! What have I done for thee?"

And this is real success; to serve Christ always, everywhere, doing ever the next thing for him. It is not great services that make the sum and substance of a Christian life, but service small or great, day by day and hour by hour, until he calls us.

A certain "saint" of the olden time, named Theodolus, in order to put heaven under contribution, stood on a pillar forty years, in sight of an admiring multitude, until in his vainglorious complacency he cried, "O God, where is another like me?" A voice from heaven answered, "The clown Christopher is holier than thou!" Whereupon the saint descended from his pillar and sought until he found the mummer in the crowd. "What hast thou done," he asked, "that God should praise thee? As for me, I have spent forty years on yonder pillar, making merit, under the blazing suns and storms of heaven. Tell me, what good thing hast thou done?" And the mummer answered, "I? Nothing! I have loved my Lord and sought to follow him; but, as for good works, I can recall none. But wait; I do remember that yesterday I saw a poor wretch beaten and wounded in the street, and I bethought me of Christ and of his Good Samaritan; and for my Lord's

sake I bound up his wounds and ran away; but I knew not that any gave heed to it."

Of those who sound a trumpet to herald their alms the Master says, "Verily, they have their reward;" they have it in the praises of men. Not great crusades, nor the founding of colleges and hospitals, nor other deeds that are blazoned abroad, shall be deemed worthiest in the Great Day; but rather the things that are done modestly and humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, by those who care less for fame than for their Lord's "Well done." These shall shine brightest on the pages of the Book of Life.

O, that will be a Day of great surprises! "And many that are first shall be last, and the last first." Many shall be called to the high places who here wist not that their faces shone. "*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee to drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*"

AT THE BRINK OF THE WATERS.

"When ye are come to the brink of the water, ye shall stand still in Jordan."—Joshua 3, 8.

Go as far as God bids you and stand still: stand still and look for a miracle!

But, perhaps, you do not believe in miracles? You must if you believe in God; since everything he does is miraculous. A man in charge of an army, finding it necessary to cross Jordan at the flood, would call upon his engineers to build a pontoon bridge; but his bridge would be no miracle. All that we do is commonplace; but the moment God begins to work, we cry, "Wonderful!" He builds no bridges but sends his people through the river dry-shod. Our extremity is his opportunity. When we have reached the end of our tether, we may confidently look to him.

This was the twice-taught lesson of Israel. On escaping from Egypt, a horde of fugitive slaves, they found themselves shut up at Pi-hahiroth, in a pocket between the mountains and the sea. They could hear in the distance the rattle of Pharaoh's chariots and the shouting of his armed men; then they cried unto the Lord in their distress and he saved them. The waters of the sea were divided and, passing through unscathed, they sang, "Who

is like unto our God? Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!" Aye, doing miracles!

That was forty years before; and meanwhile the horde of fugitive slaves had become a mighty nation. And now again they were come to the great waters. The Lord speaks, as before, "Go forward!" The priests, bearing the Ark of the Covenant, are to advance until their feet are "dipped in the brim of the water;" and there, where human power ends, God promises to meet them with a demonstration of his omnipotence. His word holds good; "the waters from below are cut off from the waters that come from above and they stand upon an heap;" and the people pass over into the Land of Promise.

The law here stated is of universal application. "God helps those who help themselves."—"Undertake great things for God and expect great things from God."—"According to your faith be it unto you." Had the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant gone forward with laggard step, flouting at miracles, they would have met with the discomfiture which befalls the doubting and caviling in every age. But they had proven God and were prepared to take him at his word. The roaring waters of the Jordan swelled before them, but they advanced as confidently as if about to ford a babbling brook. As a matter of course, the miracle was forthcoming. *As a matter of course*, I say; for God is a covenant-keeping God, and hope, founded on his promises, "maketh not ashamed."

In the application of this rule let us begin at the lower level of life, that is, in *Secular Affairs*. It is

possible no doubt for a business man to achieve success of a sort without taking God into his reckoning; but the house which he builds is at best a house of cards. All true and enduring success is won by those whose pathway is under the shadow of Sinai and over the slopes of Olivet. It makes a great difference to a man, in the long run, whether he lives and labors with or without God. Up to a certain point, given ordinary energy, health and opportunity, man is the architect of his own fortunes; but beyond that his success is from above. "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."

On the shore of Gennesareth a group of fishermen were mending their nets, in the early morning, when Jesus came that way. He spoke for a while concerning the things of the Kingdom, and then said to them, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." They answered, "We have toiled all night and taken nothing. (How many a man has spent his life in taking naught but water-hauls!) Nevertheless at thy word we will let down the nets." And thereupon they enclosed a great draught of fishes, filling their boats to the gunwale. O, blessed is the man, in workshop or office, who has thus taken Christ into a silent partnership. Not that a superficial success is impossible without him; but the highest and best is always a miracle; and the Lord alone can accomplish it. Do your best, my friend: use your resources of time and energy to the utmost; and then, without fear or misgiving, look to him! Courage *plus* Faith is bound to win.

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To gain or lose it all."

But will our rule apply in the larger provinces, as, for example, in the pursuit of Truth? Aye, when eyesight fails the veil is lifted. We want to know about God and immortality, about providence and grace, about all problems of the invisible and eternal life. "Wisdom is the principal thing." How shall we attain unto it? If we live up to the full measure of our light, greater light will be given us. The lantern in the hand of the truth-seeker casts its gleam but the length of a single step: nor will it ever shine further, except as he moves on. To him that hath shall be given. "The path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The burning bush, which Moses saw in the desert of Midian, provoked in him a mighty curiosity. And he said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight. why the bush burneth and is not consumed!" The thinker, standing where Moses stood, is confronted by two dangers: On the one hand he may resolve to tear the bush asunder, in order to discover its secret; and, behold, there is nothing there! This is ever the penalty of presumption. Is it strange that those destructive critics who have rent the Scriptures, word from word, in the hope of finding the rationale of inspiration, have had their labor for their pains? But the other danger is that the truth-seeker may be frightened by the burning bush and run away; in which case there is no revelation for him. That way lies Agnosticism. Nay, stand and listen! Draw not

too near, yet retreat not! "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Thus standing with bowed head, awaiting the lesson of the supernatural, thou art not far from the kingdom of God. He speaks from the bush: "I am the God of thy fathers; and behold I will send thee!" He who thus pursues his quest to the uttermost limit of his present light and stands there in an attitude of faith, will find the veil lifting more and more. For truth is a revelation; and revelation is ever a miracle. "There are so many voices and none of them is without signification"; but the gift of interpretation is for the man of courage and faith. For him there are always "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." He passes on, from truth to truth, as through doors opening one by one, until the last admits him into the ineffable glory.

We turn now to character-building; and here also the rule applies. The high aim of every earnest man is perfection. "Be ye perfect, saith the Lord, for I am perfect." In the pursuit of this ambition we have two standards, and alas! both baffle us. There is the Law; and, however we hue to the line, the result is *transgression.* The word is significant; "crossing the line." Our other standard is Christ, the ideal Man. We fain would measure up to his stature; but the result is always *short-coming.* "There is no difference, we have all sinned and come short." What then? Shall we give up, discouraged? Nay; go forward! Go forward till your feet are in the very brink of the waters. Go to your uttermost, and then look to God. The thing which is impossible to you is easy to him,

"Forget, therefore, the things which are behind and reach forth unto those which are before, and press toward the mark!" This "mark" is perfection, and God will accomplish it. Not until death, indeed; but then, hosanna! sin will fall away like a garment and we shall be glorified in him.

It is like the carving of a statue. We strive with hammer and chisel, with infinite pains, day by day, yet our work falls short of our ideal. It lacks something. Touch it; the marble is cold and irresponsive. There is no flush of health, no sparkle of life. But be of good courage: be not faithless, but believing. The veil will lift in fulness of time. God will touch our best and make it perfect. The cold statue will glow with warmth and palpitate with life. We shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness.

Then, as to our service in the kingdom of Christ. The secret of success here, also, lies in doing our best and waiting on God. It is for us to go forth, sowing the seed of the kingdom; but as to the harvest this is the miracle for which we look to God.

His word to every man is, "Go work to-day." There is a place for us in the tillage of the world. Our highest glory is in our appointment to be laborers together with God. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hands for thou knowest not whether shall prosper this or that." It is for us to scatter the seed-corn in the furrows and leave the result with God. He must give the dews of heaven, the sunshine, the early and the latter rain. Sowing is man's work; germination is a miracle. But faith sees the miracle aforetime and reckons on it. Faith accepts the promise, "My

word shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I send it."

Had the Church thus apprehended her duty, under the great commission "Go ye, preach the Gospel!" there is every reason to believe that the world would have been evangelized long ago. We are mourning to-day over the murder of our missionaries in China, and the faint-hearted are saying, "Is it worth while to be sending them forth to death?" It is enough for us that we are under marching orders. The word is, "Go forward!" The Land of Promise is before us, "and Jordan rolls between!" Go down into the brink of the waters, O fearing, trembling Church! If men must die, what then? The law of the kingdom is *mors janua vitæ*. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Shall we begrudge the seed-corn? The Lord waits to be taken at his word. Not yet have those who bear the Ark of the Covenant gone far enough into the waters. They shrink from the chill. Faith *plus* courage will win not China only, but the whole world to the Gospel of Christ.

And now, with reference to the familiar controversy as to the efficacy of prayer: here, too, the rule applies. The promise is, "Ask and it shall be given you." This asking is the path leading down to the brink of the waters; and God's giving is the miracle with which he meets us.

We are accustomed to speak of "the power of prayer." We say it "moves the hand that moves the world." In fact, prayer, intrinsically, has no

power at all. It is but breath, the breath of a mortal man. But it has pleased God to affix a great promise to it ; a promise in which there is no if, or perhaps, or peradventure : "Ask and it *shall* be given unto you ; seek, and ye *shall* find ; knock, and it *shall* be opened unto you." It is this promise that gives omnipotence to our plea : for hath God spoken, and shall he not perform it ?

One condition, however, is attached to the efficacy of prayer ; namely, faith: "According to your faith be it unto you." If, as we go down to the brink of the waters, the swellings of the great river stretch impassable before us, we must nevertheless be confident that God will lead us through dry-shod. It is for us to put him in remembrance of his promises and, confronting the apparently impossible, stand firm and see his salvation.

It was thus that Bartimeus in the Valley of Jericho cried aloud, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." A blind beggar, with naught to lean upon but his great courage and greater faith ! In vain did the bystanders seek to silence him. He would go to his uttermost : and if he failed it should not be for the lack of importunity. And Jesus said, "What wilt thou ?"—"O, that I might receive my sight !"—"Receive thy sight."—The miracle was wrought ! In a moment the film was lifted from his poor eyes, and he saw the green fields, the purple vineyards, the blue sky and the face of Jesus, who had healed him.

And there is, finally, a lesson here for those who are in terror of Death. It was but yesterday that a friend said, "My life would be full of unalloyed happiness

were I not so fearful of death ; I tremble whenever I think of it." Fear not ! God parts the waters for his people. Dying grace is given in the hour of need.

But the thing which I desire to say, at this point, has been so aptly put by a recent author* that I venture to use her words. A mountain child, humble and unschooled, has been dreaming dreams and seeing visions. She speaks thus :—

"Once there was a boy that was dreadful scaret o' dyin'. Some folks is that way, you know ; they ain't never done it to know how it feels, and they're scaret. And this boy was that way. He wa'nt very rugged, his health was sort o' slim, and mebbe that made him think about sech things more. 'T any rate, he was terr'ble scaret o' dyin.' 'T was a long time ago this was,—the time when posies and creatures could talk so's folks could know what they was sayin'.

And one day, as this boy, his name was Reuben,—I forgot his other name—as Reuben was settin' under a tree, an ellum tree, cryin', he heerd a little, little bit of a voice,—not squeaky, you know, but small and thin and soft like,—and he see 'twas a posey talkin'. 'Twas one o' them posies they call Benjamins, with three-cornered whitey blowths with a mite o' pink on 'em, and it talked in a kind o' pinkey-white voice, and it says, "What are you cryin' for, Reuben?" And he says, "'Cause I'm scaret o' dyin'," says he ; "I'm dreadful scaret o' dyin'." Well, what do you think? That posey jest laughed,—most cur'us little pinky-white laugh 't was,—and it says, the Benjamin says : "Dyin'! Scaret o' dyin'? Why, I die myself every single year o' my life." "Die yourself!" says Reuben.

*Story-tell Lib : by Annie Trumbull Slosson.

" You're foolin'; you're alive this minute." "'Course I be," says the Benjamin; " but that's neither here nor there,—I've died every year sence I can remember." " Don't it hurt?" says the boy. " No, it don't," says the posey; " it's real nice. You see, you get kind o' tired a-holdin' up your head straight and lookin' peart and wide awake, and tired o' the sun shinin' so hot, and the winds blowin' you to pieces, and the bees a-takin' your honey. So it's nice to feel sleepy and kind o' hang your head down, and get sleepier and sleepier, and then find you're droppin' off. Then you wake up jest 't the nicest time o' year, and come up and look 'round, and——why, I like to die, I do." But someways that didn't help Reuben much as you'd think. " I ain't a posey," he thinks to himself, " and mebbe I would n't come up."

Well, another time he was settin' on a stone in the lower pastur', cryin' again, and he heerd another cur'us little voice. 'T wa'nt like the posey's voice, but 't was a little, woolly, soft, fuzzy voice, and he see 't was a caterpillar a-talkin' to him. And the caterpillar says, in his fuzzy little voice, he says, " What you cryin' for, Reuben?" And the boy, he says, " I'm powerful scaret o' dyin', that's why," he says. And that fuzzy caterpillar he laughed. " Dyin'!" he says. " I'm lottin' on dyin' myself. All my fam'ly," he says, " die every once in a while, and when they wake up they're jest splendid,—got wings, and fly about, and live on honey and things. Why, I would n't miss it for anything!" he says. " I'm lottin' on it." But somehow that did n't chirk up Reuben much. " I ain't a caterpillar," he says, " and mebbe I would n't wake up at all."

Well, there was lots o' other things talked to that boy, and tried to help him,—trees and posies and grass and

crawlin' things, that was allers a-dyin' and livin', and livin' and dyin'. Reuben thought it did n't help him any, but I guess it did a little mite, for he could n't help thinkin' o' what they every one on 'em said. But he was scaret all the same.

And one summer he begun to fail up faster and faster, and he got so tired he could n't hardly hold his head up, but he was scaret all the same. And one day he was layin' on the bed, and lookin' out o' the east winder, and the sun kep' a-shinin' in his eyes till he shet 'em up, and he fell asleep. He had a real good nap, and when he woke up he went out to take a walk.

And he begun to think o' what the posies and trees and creatures had said about dyin', and how they laughed at his bein' scaret at it, and he says to himself, "Why, someways I don't feel so scaret to-day, but I s'pose I be." And just then what do you think he done? Why, he met a Angel. He'd never seed one afore, but he knowed it right off. And the Angel says, "Ain't you happy, little boy?" And Reuben says, "Well I would be, only I'm so dreadful scaret o' dyin'. It must be terr'ble cur'us," he says, "to be dead." And the Angel says, "Why, you be dead." And he was.

I think this touches a responsive cord in all our hearts. For death, even to the most trustful and courageous, is a passage into the land of mystery. No doubt when Moses was climbing the slopes of Nebo he still longed to live. Was ever a day so fair? Were ever the hillsides so beautiful? He turned to look upon the tents of Israel in the valley below and, uttering his last farewell, pursued his upward path. And then God met him and, as the Moslems say, "kissed his soul away." His fear was but moment-

ary; the chill is only at the water's brink; a moment later he stood on the further shore praising God.

It must have been observed that one thing has been omitted in this consideration, and that, *the matter of supreme importance, namely, Salvation.* The sole condition of eternal life is that a man shall believe in Christ. The word is very plain; "He that believeth in the Son shall be saved." And yet it is apparent that faith has no intrinsic worth; its value is due wholly to the fact that God has been pleased to make it the imperative condition of his unspeakable gift. Faith marks the utmost limit of human strength; as it is written, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom God hath sent." We may not be able to comprehend the rationale of faith, any more than the children of Israel were able to perceive beforehand the advantage of going down into the waters. There is only one thing to do, that is, to heed the command and leave the rest with God. This, in brief, is the gospel plan of salvation. It involves both courage and faith; courage to go blindfold in a path divinely marked out, and faith to anticipate the great miracle of grace. For conversion is the pre-eminent miracle and God never performs it until a man has reached and knows he has reached the utmost limit of his own resources.

The penitent thief did what he could. Few and painful were the hours allotted to him for reviewing the past and preparing for Eternity. Whatever he did must be done quickly. He saw the calm courage and patience of the Nazarene who was dying beside him; he saw and was convinced. A word of prayer, wrung from his agonized soul, marked the limit of

his ability : "Lord, remember me!" But that was enough. God asks no better than our best. "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise!"

If you covet salvation, my friend, take God at his word. Do as he commands. Do not stand trembling, doubting, hesitating, on the brink of Jordan. Press on, and the waters will open before you! God is the Mighty to save. Salvation is his greatest wonder. Only believe! His hand is outstretched : place your hand in his and say, "Lord, I believe!" Then doubt no more ; question no more. You have done your best and utmost : now leave the rest with him.

ON CHOOSING A FRIEND

"He that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—Prov. 18, 24.

The new version has it, "He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction." The statement in its earlier form is obviously true, but as revised it is full of helpful suggestion. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!" It is important that a man should have enemies as well as friends, else he is not a downright man. "Popularity," says Carlyle, "is as a blaze of illumination kindled round a man, showing what is in him, not putting the slightest more item into him, often abstracting much from him, conflagrating the poor man himself into ashes and *caput mortuum.*" In former times it was the custom in Yale College to elect nine members of each class as "cochleaureati," by reason of personal popularity; who in turn elected the "best fellow" of their number to receive "the wooden spoon." The passing of this custom, a few years ago, was a great grief to the Alumni but it is generally conceded now that the University is better without it. The desire for popularity is an *ignis fatuus* which leads many a noble youth into the quagmire of an ignoble life. It is not so important, in college or anywhere else, that

a man should be a good fellow as that he should be a square man.

It is necessary, however, that we should have friends. For lack of them we grow morose, apathetic and unprofitable. It is true that a man should be self-reliant. I confess to a strong liking for the frontiersman who, when announced at the door of the White House with the words, "Make way for Colonel Crockett!" pushed the page aside, saying, "David Crockett makes way for himself." It must be remembered, however, that society is an interdependency in which no man liveth unto himself. As iron sharpeneth iron so a man sharpeneth the face of his friend. And he is always our truest friend who does most to bring out the best that is in us.

It is true, also, that solitude has its uses: nevertheless to live to oneself is to lose one's opportunity of influence. It is observed that the poetry which was written by Wordsworth when he was living apart from the world at Rydal Mount shows a distinct loss of power. There is an important truth in Cowper's words:

> "I praise the Frenchman, his remark was shrewd,
> 'How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude.'
> Yet give me still a friend in my retreat
> Whom I may whisper, 'Solitude is sweet.'"

And nowhere are friends more necessary than in the city; for of all wildernesses this is most lone and dreary. Here are multitudes of people, jostling each other on the thoroughfares, who in each other's eyes are scarcely more important than flies creeping along the wall. Each seems to be saying, like the Miller of Dee, "I care for nobody, no not I; and nobody cares for me." O, the loneliness of it! O, the forlorn

selfishness of it! Our streets are full of friendless men and women, sore-hearted and disappointed, who might be saved from despair by a word of sympathy. Now and then one crosses the Bridge of Sighs to self-inflicted death:

> "O, it was pitiful;
> Near a whole cityful,
> Friend she had none!"

It would appear that our churches should stretch forth the friendly hand; and, indeed, the disposition is not lacking. But the chill of strangeness and personal seclusion is in the air. We scarcely know our neighbor in the next pew. It was a just word that was dropped into a minister's letter-box after he had preached on "The Recognition of Saints in Heaven," suggesting that he preach on the recognition of saints on earth.

But he who would have friends must show himself friendly. There are two parties to every covenant. Advances must be made. And just here is need of caution; for bad friends are infinitely worse than none at all.

> "Friends are like melons: shall I tell you why?
> To find one good, you must a hundred try."

A true friendship rests on four pillars; the first of which is *Mutual Respect.* In choosing a friend we should at the outset have due regard for character. One who is addicted to vice of any kind, to falsehood or dishonesty, foul speech or unholy life, cannot be worthy of confidence. He who will fool another will be likely to fool me. And the very heart of friendship is confidence. When Alexander had been forewarned that his court physician was

about to administer poison in his medicine, he placed the note under his pillow, sent for his physician and, looking calmly into his face, drank the cup which had been prepared for him. It is such confidence as this that true friendship demands; and he who is unworthy of it should be ruled out.

The fabulous Circe had a garden whose gates were ever open to passers-by. To her guests she offered a sweet potion, but those who drank were straightway transformed into dogs and swine and all manner of four-footed and creeping things. On my way to church this morning I passed a group of young men, one of whom was relating a story. I caught enough of it to inform me that I was passing by Circe's garden; and the flushed faces and laughter of the listeners betrayed the transformation that was going on.

It is a good rule to select our friends from among our betters. To choose from beneath may be magnanimous, but danger lies that way. No influence in the world is so pernicious as that of an evil-minded associate. It is like the ivy which I once saw clambering up the ruins of an ancient castle at Innisfallen. It had found its way in and out of door and lattice until, displacing stone from stone, it towered, as if in triumph, over the dilapidated structure.

The second pillar of Friendship is *Mutual Sympathy:* that is, an agreement of feeling and conviction as to important things. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" I came down the German Molkenkur one evening at sunset and turned aside from the path into the forest to see the crimson glory. The Rhine and the Neckar, coming together

far below, looked like rivers of blood. The tiles of Heidelberg were glowing like gold, and earth and heaven were bathed in splendor. I said aloud unconsciously, "Wonderful!" and a voice behind me said, "*Schön! Schön!*" I turned and saw a tall Saxon, who proved to be a painter of the Court, standing like myself lost in wonder at the scene. The common chord which had been struck in those brief words drew us close together as we walked down the mountain in the gathering gloom. Years have passed, and I have never seen that man again. Yet often have I recalled with pleasure that brief but real friendship. "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind."

And this brings me to the thought of Christian friendship. Here runs the cleavage which divides the world. One who is not a Christian thinks of Christ as "a root out of a dry ground" in whom "there is no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty that he should desire him." A Christian, on the other hand, sees in Christ the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely, his Alpha and Omega, the beginning of every hope and aspiration, the end of every noble endeavor; his first, last, midst and all in all. It is obviously not possible that a friendship should be ever at its best unless the parties to the covenant are agreed as to the matter of supreme concern. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," was not written with special reference to wedlock, but to all the relations of a Christian life.

The truest, sweetest friendship in the world is that which finds its counterpart in the walk of the

two disciples to Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-32). They were talking together of their mutual interest in Christ who had just been crucified. "And it came to pass that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near and went with them; but their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Then they came to the village: "and it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them; and their eyes were opened and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way?"

The third pillar is *Mutual Helpfulness.* It is not well to choose for one's intimate friend a melancholy man; one who thinks that the times are out of joint and everything is going to the bad. There is sorrow enough in the world without courting it. I would rather spend a cheery hour with Dick Swiveller, carrying his flute under his arm and humming, "Away with melancholy," than a day among the misereres of the Capuchins.

Nor is it well to choose a flatterer. My friend must be ingenuous and frank with me. One of the duties of friendship is candid reproof. I detest the man who congratulates himself on his "bluntness." We must needs be thankful to any one who will brush off a venomous insect from our face, but it is not necessary that he should do it with a sledge hammer. To pluck the mote out of a friend's eye is distinctly in the nature of kindness, but it becomes

the very opposite when done with hot pincers. True frankness is ever tender and sympathetic and, while administering reproof on occasion, it stimulates to high purpose and endeavor. A traveler in the mountains of Madeira pays tribute to a guide who, as they journeyed up steep roads through the darkness, kept calling, "Press on, Señor. I can see light yonder!" Thus it is the office of friendship to lend a hand in darkness and give encouragement to those who have fallen by the way.

Let it be remembered, however, that friendship is a mutual affair. It is give and take. "And remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." The service must not be one-sided. "He that hath friends must show himself friendly." The old saying, "He is my friend who brings grist to my mill" is only half a truth; the other is that I bring grist to his mill.

A veteran of Balaklava relates that, as he fell wounded with a bullet through both knees, his bunkmate ran to him, crying, "Climb up and I will carry you off!" But, clinging to his comrade's back, he perceived that he was bleeding from a mortal wound; whereupon he begged to be put down; but the faithful fellow bore him off the field and, staggering, fell dead. Thus true friends serve each other.

The fourth pillar of Friendship is *Steadfastness.* It is easy to find fair weather friends; but the friend in need is the friend indeed. In Greek mythology friendship was represented as a young man, bareheaded, in tattered garments, having on his forearm the inscription "*vivere et mori,*" on his forehead "*aestate et hieme*" and on his breast "*prope et longe.*"

Ay, this is the oath of the covenant, for Life and Death, for Summer and Winter, Near and Far!

Have you such friends? Then hold them fast! Be loyal to them. Their love is not to be valued with rubies or the gold of Ophir.

> "The friends thou hast and their adoption tried,
> Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel."

It remains to be said that the friend above all friends, who meets all possible requirements, is Jesus. It is not probable that Solomon had immediate reference to him in our text; yet assuredly he is the one that sticketh closer than a brother. How near he comes! "He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." How condescending he is! He invites us into the "secret place of his pavilion," where he imparts "the secret of his covenant." How gloriously and beyond all peradventure he has confirmed his friendship; as it is written, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"; but, "while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." How constant his love! It is recorded that "having loved his own, he loved them to the end." He knew that Thomas would doubt him, that Peter would deny him, that all would forsake him; and yet he loved them to the very end.

Have you made his acquaintance? If not, come to Calvary and let him seal the covenant with his blood. You may do without his friendship for a while; but twice in the future you are bound to need it. Once, when you come to the border-land: for in the dying hour, there is no friend like him. "Where now," said Jonathan Edwards at the last,

waving aside all others, "is Jesus, my tried and trusted friend?" And again, you will need him at the great assize. Blessed is the man who has a Friend at Court! Jesus has promised to stand at the Great Day as an Advocate in the behalf of those who love him.

But if we would claim his friendship then, we must enter into covenant with him here and now. There are two parties to this covenant. His hand is stretched out: will you take it?

THE SUN ON GIBEON

"Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon!' And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord harkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel."—Joshua 10, 12-14.

The battle here referred to is called by Dean Stanley the "Marathon of the religious history of the world."* It was a marshaling of truth, progress and righteousness against barbarism and darkness. Who shall conjecture what the effect would have been, on the progress of civilization, had it terminated otherwise?

A crisis had been reached in the history of Israel. The long journey through the wilderness was ended; Jericho, the key-city of the promised land, had been reduced. Ai, after a disastrous repulse, had also

* "It is one of the few military engagements which belong equally to Ecclesiastical and to Civil History, which have decided equally the fortunes of the world and of the Church. The roll will be complete if to this we add two or three more which we shall encounter in Jewish History; and, in later times, the battle of the Milvian Bridge, which involved the fall of Paganism; the battle of Poitiers, which sealed the fall of Arianism; the battle of Bedr, which secured the rise of Mahometanism in Asia; the battle of Tours, which checked the spread of Mahometanism in Western Europe; the battle of Lepanto, which checked it in Eastern Europe; the battle of Lützen, which determined the balance of power between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in Germany."

been taken; and the Israelites had pushed their way to the heights, whence the alluring fields of Canaan were in clear view.

At this juncture the five kings of Canaan combined to arrest the progress of the invaders, organizing a great army under the command of Adonibezek, the king of Jerusalem. Their initial move was against the city of Gibeon, whose inhabitants had entered into an alliance with Israel. The beleaguered city sent word to Joshua: "Slack not thy hand; come up quickly and save us!" He delayed not a moment; making a moonlight march of fifteen miles through the valley, he fell upon the confederate army at daybreak. Every inch of ground was fiercely disputed; but as the day wore on, the Canaanites were driven along the upper roads until they crossed the ridge of Beth-horon.

The decisive moment had arrived; a crushing blow now meant the conquest of the land. But it was evident to Joshua that the approaching darkness would enable the fugitives to escape and to reoganize their forces. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. The mighty prayer was offered: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon!" God hears; the light lingers. In headlong flight the Canaanites hasten through the valley of Ajalon toward the maritime plain. The way is clear before the host of Israel. Canaan is won.

It is well that this victory shall find place in Jasher, the book of national lyrics; for "there was no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man."

The picture is before us.* In the foreground, with the confusion of battle around him, stands Joshua in his chariot with uplifted hand. The storm, which lent its fury to the earlier fray, is rolling away in the distance. The arrested rays of the declining sun shine through the overhanging clouds. The panic-stricken Canaanites are crowded along the mountain roads, pursued by their eager foe. Thus "the Lord fought for Israel that day."

I. The scene here portrayed stands for *Truth in Art.* It is a departure from conventional methods. There is, in some quarters, a strong prejudice against any artistic beautifying of the sanctuary; an objection realized in the severe plainness of the Puritan Chapel and the Friends' Meeting-house. But God's temple in the olden time was called "the House Magnifical," and was adorned with gold and silver, fine-twined curtains, bells and pomegranates, and all manner of "cunning work." Its porch was sustained by two great pillars called Jachin and Boaz, meaning, "He will establish" and "In him is strength;" but as the eye wandered upward along these symbols of power it fell upon their capitals of lily work. Thus it is written, "Honor and majesty are before thee; strength and beauty are in thy sanctuary."

But whatsoever of beauty is found in God's temple should be a perfect expression of truth; since the Church itself is "the ground and pillar of truth." Things out of proportion, twisted, distorted, ugly or

*This sermon was preached in the Marble Collegiate Church, at the dedication of a memorial window, "the gift of Sarah A. Sandham in loving memory of her son, George Augustus Sandham. 1834-1880."

misshapen, have no place here. It is said that when Cromwell, the great iconoclast, would have torn down the images in the cathedral at Glasgow, one of his lieutenants remonstrated, saying, "Sir, here is no possibility of idolatry; these be images, indeed, but they are not made in the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath or in the waters under the earth." A like suggestion might be offered as to much of our ecclesiastical art. God's house is the seat of the beauty of holiness; but holiness is whole-ness or symmetry. A false note in an anthem or a false line in a painted window is as bad as a false word in the pulpit, as far as it goes. Not the preacher only but the place must have a voice to say, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Here is the utility of the beautiful. The place, the sermon and the ordinance must all point to Him who said of himself, "I am the truth."

II. We are reminded also, by this memorial, of *the Truth of History.* In all passing events, there are two factors, the human and the divine. The former is here expressed in the onrushing power of the martial host. Napoleon said, "Victory goes with the strongest battalions." But the man who writes history with this alone in mind, will find himself in wandering mazes lost.

There are chroniclers who exhaust their ingenuity in analyzing the character of the *dramatis personæ* and philosophizing about their motives with no regard for

Deus ex machina. They hear the roll of wheels, the stamp of great hammers with all the clang and rattle of the vast mechanism, but they make no note of that Spirit in the wheels, of which it is written, "Whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went; and when they went it was as the voice of the Almighty!"

> "O blest is he to whom is given
> The instinct that can tell,
> That God is on the field, when He
> Is most invisible."

Here is the constant factor in the problem. It was little wonder that Napoleon was unable to divine the cause of his defeat at Waterloo. His great battalions could not win because the God of nations made bare his arm to arrest an organized assault on freedom and civilization. For a like reason the plans of Philip II for the overthrow of Protestantism came to naught. In vain were those mighty galleons. *Deus afflavit!* God breathed; and they were scattered in wreckage on a hundred shores. He who would write or read history must reckon with God.

At this moment the Great Powers are conferring as to affairs in China. What avengement shall be exacted for our slain missionaries? What disposition shall be made of the vast barbaric Empire? How shall the spoils be divided? But when diplomacy has done its best and utmost, when the allied forces have sheathed their futile swords, then we shall hear from God. For it is true of nations as of men, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

III. Here is a suggestion, also, of *the Truth of Revelation.* The portion of Scripture at hand shares

with the story of Jonah the honor of having provoked more antagonism among the destructive critics than any other portion of Holy Writ. A well-known writer says in a recent novel, "No thinking man or woman any longer believes the Bible to be true." Such delicious assurance as this is not uncommon among the dilettanti. We ministers covet the privilege of thus dogmatizing. I venture, however, to assert with much modesty that there are a few people still left, and some not wholly without culture and education, who believe the Bible to be true. Nay more, there are those who say, without misgiving, that the heart of the universal Church, despite the discordant voices of the disloyal few, beats true to the veracity of the Word of God.

"Do we then believe that the sun stood still on Gibeon?" Why not? I say, "Last night the sun went down in a blaze of glory. It was as if gates of ruby opened and closed in the West; as if bars of fire and floods of molten gold were thrown across the sky. It was a wonderful sunset." But the voice of the objector is heard, "Hold, the sun never goes down! You should know that there is no such thing as a sunset." Well, my friend, take your analytic criticism and be off with you. God and angels and reasonable men, when they speak, presume that their hearers are possessed of common sense; you have it not.

We believe that the story of Beth-horon is not a myth. The fact that it is quoted from Jasher, the book of Jewish lyrics, does not signify that it is fabulous; since the inspired writer approves and endorses it. From the standpoint of the embattled host the sun did stand still. It might have been stated in

scientific terminology; but the Book was written for all sorts and conditions of men. The day was prolonged, by divine interposition, for the accomplishment of the great purpose in view. This is enough; the light lingered till the battle was won.

IV. Here is also a setting forth of *the Truth of Prayer*. All prayer is in pursuance of a covenant, and to this covenant there are two parties. One is the man in yonder chariot, with his hand uplifted to the skies. His plea is not expressed in formula. He is not "saying his prayers." The fate of Israel is in the balance, and the crisis admits of no circuitous phrases. The heart's blood of Joshua is in his supplication. He cannot pause for an exordium; but in quick, imperative phrase, hurls out his soul toward God. Here is prayer; truth on its knees. So did John Knox plead in the crisis of the Reformation, "O God, give me Scotland or I die!"

The other party to the covenant is the God behind yonder sun. He meets the truth of petition with the truth of promise. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Do you say, it would require a miracle to answer that prayer? True; every answer to prayer is in the nature of a miracle; that is, it arrests the usual order of things. Why should it not? Do you say, "God is immutable"? Yes, but immutability is not immobility. God is not like the great stone face on the palisades. He does not gaze on us with the dull eyes of the granite sphinx. He "can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." He has eyes to see, a heart to pity and hands to help those who cry unto him.

Or, do you object that "law is irreversible"? How do you know? We have indeed but a slight acquaintance with what we call law. Who shall say what portion of God's Code is held in reserve, to be used on occasion by the Lawgiver and Administrator of universal affairs? A shop-keeper puts a few vendibles in his window for the eyes of passers-by, but his stock is on his shelves within. So God has placed some of his laws on exhibition; the multitude merely look in at his windows and pass on; but occasionally one enters and, in the reserve of divine omnipotence, equips himself for life and duty.

An answer to prayer is always an expression of this divine reserve. It may be wrought by the reversal of known law, or more probably by the operation of laws not otherwise revealed to us. The power and philosophy of prayer are succinctly set forth in David's words: "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted!"

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of;
For what are men better than sheep and goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
But for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round world is, every way,
Bound with gold chains about the feet of God."

It will be granted that, if necessary, God could arrest or reverse the entire machinery of the universe in order to answer this prayer of Joshua. To say otherwise is to deny his omnipotence; as it is written, "Ye do err not knowing the power of God."

A step further; the possibility of the miracle

being granted, its probability is argued from the analogy of the whole journey through the wilderness. It began with the miraculous plagues of Egypt; then came the miraculous dividing of the Red Sea, the miraculous pillar of cloud and fire, the miraculous manna, the miraculous flocks of quails, the miraculous water gushing from the rock, the miraculous phenomena at Sinai, the miraculous opening of the earth to swallow up Korah and his followers, the miraculous fire from heaven on the altar, the miraculous budding of Aaron's rod, the miraculous parting of the Jordan, the miraculous falling of the walls of Jericho: a continuous record of miracles! And now, at this critical juncture, is not a miracle the very thing to be expected, in order that the forty years of supernatural guidance may be crowned with a triumphant consummation?

And the final step in the argument is the fact that Scripture so states it. The record must be taken as true until contravened. It is of slight importance to inquire how the miracle was wrought. Whether God arrested the progress of the heavenly bodies, or laid his controlling hand on the laws of refraction, it matters not. The prolongation of the day for the triumph of the Jewish host is the matter of supreme consequence; and that this occurred, we believe because the Scripture says so; since we receive the Bible as the Word of God.

V. Here, finally, is somewhat *as to the truth in life and character.* On September 15, 1880, George Augustus Sandham, whom we memorialize to-day, closed his earthly life. Those who loved him said sorrowfully, "He is dead!" But, behold, he yet

speaketh. That which was best and truest in his life is eloquent to-day. He had faults, doubtless, like others; but they have faded from the memory of men. It is the kind decree of Providence that the best part of us shall be immortal. There is little truth in the saying that "the evil a man does lives after him" while "the good is oft interréd with his bones." Let us say rather, "A charméd life old Goodness hath; the tares may perish, but the grain is not for death." It is our high purpose, our noble effort, our devotion to God and goodness that survives us. The echoes of our brave battle linger in the valley of life, when we have passed on.

It is objected that there is too much of martial metaphor in recent preaching. Can that be? Is not life strenuous, from beginning to end? Did not the Master say, "I am come to bring not peace but a sword"? Is it not written, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." A true man finds himself at war with himself, beating down his baseness and selfishness. He finds himself shoulder to shoulder with others in the overthrowing of the strongholds of iniquity, in striving for the betterment of our social life; he is never content until he has done his utmost to make his own vicinage a wholesome place to live in. And, above all, if he be an earnest man and true, he lends a hand in the great propaganda for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ. Thus the life well lived is a campaign of battles, clear to heaven's gate; where veterans, hard spent, put off their armor, lay by their arms, and enter into rest.

In this portrayal of the historic battle on Bethhoron, the one commonplace feature is that which at first seems strangest; to wit, the miracle. For the sun that shines upon the pathway of a heroic life never goes down. The stars in heaven fight against Sisera, always. The man in the chariot has power, through faith in omnipotence, to arrest the oncoming of any night. Thus it is written, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light." Here is the groundwork of our assurance: "God is our refuge and our strength; therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea!"

It is recorded, that when the New Hampshire troops set out on their campaign against Louisburg, they were presented with a banner by George Whitfield, on which was inscribed *Nil desperandum Christo sub duce.* Here is a watchword for earnest souls. There is no possibility of failure when the Lord goes with us; and his promise is yea and amen: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore; and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world!"

THE PEOPLE OF THAT WAY

"And the same time there arose no small stir about that way."—Acts 19, 23.

The reference here is to the followers of Christ. As yet they had no distinctive title. The Lord called them "disciples." They spoke of themselves as "brethren." The people nicknamed them "Nazarenes," and, further on, "Christians." Blessed name, given in derision but kept through centuries as a badge of honor! For the time being, however, they were an anonymous folk. The common mode of referring to them was as here indicated: they were the people of "that way."

The term was not without significance. It indicated a departure from the beaten track, an innovation, a distinct case of non-conformity. The "way" of these people was an unusual way.

I. It was a new *Way of Thinking;* that is, with reference to spiritual things. There are some religious ideas which are so universally entertained that they are justly regarded as intuitions. One of these is the concept of God. There are no atheists in the world. Everybody believes in God. The very Pantheons of the heathen show, back of all vain images, a dim apprehension of the infinite, eternal and unchangeable One.

And another of these intuitions is the concept of man. There is a bridgeless gulf between man and all the lower orders of life. And this is manifest not merely among those who formulate the proposition "*Cogito, ergo sum*," but among all sorts and conditions of men. The rudest barbarian knows that there is a generic difference between himself and all four-footed or creeping things. His fetich tells him that he is akin with the supernatural. He vaguely perceives his divine birth, the infinite possibilities of his life and character, and his destiny stretching on through eternal æons.

As to these fundamental facts there is no difference; but at this point Christianity introduces a new thought; to wit, the God-man. The doctrine of the Incarnation is peculiar to the Gospel of Christ. The word is familiar to other religions; but Christianity alone has realized it. The Orientals, feeling their way blindly, brought God down to the human level; the result was Pantheism. The Occidentals, on the other hand, endeavoring to exalt man to the divine level, produced the Pantheon, and, laughing in each others' faces at the imposition, landed in Rationalism. But the Gospel presents an actual incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ: not a theophany nor yet an apotheosis; not God dwelling in man nor man deified; but Godhood and manhood woven together as warp and woof in one inseparable fabric. He abides, solitary and alone, *Theanthropos:* "very God of very God" and, none the less, "very Man of very Man." Here, at the manger in Bethlehem, we find the differentiating thought of our religion: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God is manifest in flesh." The angels desire to look into it.

II. We find here, also, the suggestion of a new *Way of Returning to God.* All men believe in sin. How could it be otherwise, since "they which have not the law, are a law unto themselves, showing the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another"?

And along with this universal thought of sin goes the corresponding thought of retribution. These are to each other as cause and effect. There is in some quarters a disposition to eliminate the idea of retribution from modern religion; but, were it accomplished, there is not a false religion on earth which would not lift up its voice in protest. Christianity has no copyright on the announcement, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The old-time Furies followed the sinner with woolshod feet. The beak of Remorse was in the heart of Prometheus. Sisyphus pursued his wageless task. Ixion ground forever on the wheel. We say Longfellow wrote,

> "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small;
> Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all."

But Longfellow borrowed it from the Sinngedichte of the Germans; and they from the old star-worshipers:

> "God's mills grind slow,
> But they grind woe."

The doctrine of Karma as held by the Buddhists is indistinguishable from the Bible statement, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

But Christianity goes a step further: It holds not merely to the doctrine of sin and the complementary

doctrine of retribution, in common with all religions, but it suggests a new truth, found nowhere else ; namely, the possibility of Pardon.

Here is the problem : How shall God be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly ? And this problem is solved at Calvary ? "Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together ; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

Let the matter be clearly stated : There are suggestions in other religions as to right plans of living, as to methods of personal reformation, as to merit-making and works of supererogation, but nowhere else but in Christianity is a rational plan proposed for the pardon of sin. This has been called "the religion of blood." So be it : "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" is set forth in every sacrifice that was ever laid upon an altar. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." And the rationale of this cleansing lies in the fact that Christ, by his death, has expiated our sin. Thus the great problem is solved and man is reconciled with God. At the moment when Christ, bearing our sins in his body on the cross, cried, "It is finished!" the veil of the temple near by was "rent in sunder from the top to the bottom," indicating, as Paul says, that "a new and living way is consecrated for us" through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, whereby we may enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus " (Heb. 10, 19, 20).

III. Our text, still further, suggests a new and unusual *Way of Feeling* It is written, "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" but Christianity is not the only religion of love. Our Lord summed up the entire

law in two precepts, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor." But these requirements, in one form or another, are common to all religions.

All men know that, inasmuch as they live and move and have their being in God, they are bound to love him. And they know, also, that for mutual security, if for no better reason, they are bound to love one another. Christ does not claim originality for the Golden Rule. The fact was recently emphasized by Wu-Ting-Fang, the Chinese Minister at Washington, that this rule is to be found in the Analects of Confucius, though in negative form: "Thou shalt not do unto others what thou wouldst not have them do unto thee."

So far, all journey by the same path. But just here is the point of divergence: Christianity proposes a new motive for love. The people who are of "this Way," are to love God "because he first loved them." And the preëminent token of his love is herein: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." And again, the supreme motive of love toward one's fellow men is not because all are members of one household but because Christ died for all. There is not a drab or a drunkard reeling through the streets, not a thief or evil-doer anywhere, not a barbarian by the banks of the Congo, who does not appeal to every follower of Christ as being a participant in the grace that was manifested in the sacrifice of the cross. Here is the groundwork of all Christian missions, of missions in the slums, on the frontiers and among those who

dwell in the regions of darkness and the shadow of death. Christ died for all! Wherefore, in loyalty to Christ, we go forth with the evangel as "fishers of men."

IV. And here is indicated an unusual *Way of Forming Character.* All are agreed that the basis of character is the Moral Law: and as to this matter the Bible enters no exclusive claim. It is true that the one flawless and complete ethical symbol is the Decalogue; yet there is no false religion which does not present more or less imperfectly the same system of ethics. Buddhism and Brahmanism have an elaborate code of morality; the Analects of Confucius are nothing but ethics. And the mode of procedure in building character, by common consent the world over, is to line up to the Law.

And all men have an ideal of character. Plato's *Dikaios*, or just man, was constructed by borrowing the best from the characters of many who were esteemed to be good men.

But here occurs the cleavage: Christianity offers not merely rules of conduct, nor merely an ideal, but a living Exemplar, by imitating whom we may grow to the stature of perfect men. *Dikaios* was a figment of Plato's imagination: but Christ is no dream. He lived among men, walked our highways, mingled in our pursuits, shared in our toils and sufferings. He was made in all points as we are, only without sin. The world bows reverently before him as the one perfect Man. *Ecce homo!* "Who layeth anything to his charge? The verdict of the centuries is, in the language of the judge who sentenced him to death, "I find no fault in him at all."

It is a singular fact that the most popular book of our time, next to the Bible, is one which is generally conceded to have no literary merit whatever. Its plot is puerile, its main proposition is defective, its execution is crude, it is lacking in every quality that ordinarily commends a book to reviewers: yet it has found millions of readers. How shall the popularity of this book, "In His Steps," be accounted for? By the fact that it responds to the universal longing for an Exemplar, one who, exhibiting the graces of blameless character, shall make clear to us what manhood ought to be. The book, strained as it is, points out a plain path of spiritual progress and casts a hopeful sidelight on every earnest effort to attain to better things. It is an amplification of Paul's saying, "Reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus": and again, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

V. We observe here, also, the suggestion of a new and effective *Way of Making Life Tell.* There is no difference of opinion in the world as to the importance of a vocation. A man must have some visible means of livelihood; else he is a mere cumberer of the ground. The saying, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat," is not peculiar to Christianity. The only men who are worth counting in a moral census are "business men."

We meet them in the thronged street; honest toilers intent on gaining a livelihood, fortune seekers,

devotees of pleasure asking nothing but to squeeze the orange of life, and still others with covetous eyes set on high honor and emolument. They are the same everywhere. You will meet them on the streets of Bombay, of Hong Kong, of Constantinople, as well as in Christian cities. Thus far there is no difference.

But Christ introduced a new purpose in life. He led his disciples out to the slopes of the mountain and called their attention to another sort of business: "Consider the fowls of the air," he said; "they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." What then? Consume not your lives in anxious thought for a livelihood; but seek ye first of all the kingdom! And again, "Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not neither do they spin, yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." What then? Take no anxious thought for life's common needs; but with due regard for thrift and industry leave these to God and seek ye first of all the kingdom!

What is this work of the kingdom? It is to do good as we have opportunity unto all men and in everything to glorify God. It is to seek the common welfare and do one's utmost to make the world a better place to live in. It is to fall in with all true progress and hasten the coming of the Golden Age. The world is content to seek success, as Carlyle says, "by doing one thing and doing it well;" but the Christian must needs do two things and do both well. And the infinitely more important of these is the work of the kingdom; that is, to deliver the

world from sin and bind it again "as with gold chains about the feet of God."

And for this work of the kingdom a promise is given, of the enduement of power, in the bestowal of the influence of the Holy Ghost. Christ "breathed on his disciples, saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.'"

The Holy Ghost is the Executive of the Dispensation under which we are living. The world knoweth him not ; but his influence is our vital air. He who honors the Holy Ghost is like Samson in covenant vows; he who honors him not is shorn of his locks and weak as other men. I have here two needles : one of them, when placed upon a pivot, swings hither and yon where it will; the other trembles for a moment, then points unerringly due North. This is owing to the fact that the latter has been magnetized. A like difference is manifest between those who have received the influence of the Spirit and those who have not received it. A true Christian has touched the great Dynamo, and has been thrilled through and through with a divine current of energy. This is a real enduement of power, a true and abiding fitness for life.

VI. We observe, finally, the suggestion of a new *Way of Facing the Future.* All agree as to the certainty of death. "The black camel kneels at every tent." Nor is there any divergence of view as to the certainty of judgment. This is inscribed on the bricks of old Nineveh, and written on the byssus-bands of the mummies of Egypt : "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." And, still further, all are aware

that they must enter the same plea, "Guilty," on that day. What then?

At this point—where the multitude stands fearing and trembling at the great Assize, judged, condemned and ready for sentence—the Gospel proposes a hope of deliverance: a hope which is entertained by the people of "that Way." It is written: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous." He stands forth in their behalf, the holy, harmless, undefiled Son of God. He pleads the sufferings which he endured in their stead; and they believe that, because he bore the chastisement of their sins, they shall go forever free.

And then, eternity. "So shall we be forever with the Lord." We have no misgivings as to what awaits us. An effort is being made by some of our advanced thinkers to furnish a scientific demonstration of immortality. They are experimenting in laboratories, listening at strange oracles, investigating psychic phenomena. But we have no need to await their conclusions: for our faith reposes in him who said, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you," and who prayed in our behalf; "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

This is The Way; walk ye in it. It is the old way; "the way the holy prophets went, the way that leads from banishment." It is the only way of salvation; as Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is the way of peace and holiness. It is the way

out of trouble and into blessedness. It begins at the cross, where we receive Christ crucified as Prophet, Priest and King; and it ends at heaven's gate. By this Way let us journey until, with all the ransomed of the Lord, we come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads.

HAS THE QUALITY OF CHRISTIANITY DETERIORATED IN RECENT TIMES?

"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved."—Psalm 46, 5.

In the summing up of the progress of the Nineteenth Century there is but one discordant note. All agree as to the wonderful results of scientific research. The man in the laboratory, the man with the telescope and the man with the spade have all made splendid contributions to the world's encyclopedia.

In the political world there have been marvelous changes. The balance of power has shifted, like a drop of quicksilver on a geographer's chart. Our own country has developed from a petty settlement of five millions to a foremost place among the nations. Ethiopia is stretching forth her hands, and the Mongol races are pushing to the front.

Not less remarkable have been the changes in the industrial world. The man who writes the history of the Nineteenth Century will call it The Age of New Forces; of new forces and new application of force. The world's capital has been vastly multiplied, and the sum total of its industry has increased proportionately. The relation of employer to employee has been so modified that, whereas the rights of capital are recognized, the handicraftsman is far

more a man than he was a hundred years ago. Welcome the better order of things! Ring out the old, ring in the new!

And we observe a corresponding change in the province of the liberal arts and humanities. At the beginning of the century one man in every eight of the entire population was a pauper. There were then two hundred and twenty-three offenses which were punished with death on the gallows, from homicide to killing a hare in a game preserve. Laws are less punitive and more reformatory than they used to be. John Howard and Elizabeth Frye have not lived in vain. All along the path of the advancing years institutions of mercy, of education and of social security have sprung up as if by magic.

Thus around the whole horizon of the century the record of progress has been unbroken save at a single point: it is alleged that *the quality of Christianity has been steadily deteriorating*. Here is the fly in the ointment. Here is the only interruption in the exultant pæan. At this point the joyous chronicler strikes the minor note.

Is it true? Has the standard of Christian character been lowered in the progress of the years? It might indeed have been looked for as the normal result of the inclusive policy of the church. Time was when candidates for church membership were required to pass through a low wicket-gate after a season of careful and prayerful preparation. Now the doors are wide open. The drag-net encloses a great multitude of fishes of every kind, good and bad. And, once within the church, there is little danger of discipline. Stern measures have gone out of fashion.

This plan of inclusion has been in operation so long that the average of Christian faith and character might well be lowered. For, let it be remembered, the church has increased in numbers threefold during the last hundred years. Nevertheless, I do not believe that the quality of personal religion has deteriorated. On the other hand, there is reason to think that the average is higher than ever. And we reach this opinion by the application of conclusive tests.

First : *the Ministerial Test.* "Like priest, like people." It is freely asserted that the standard of common honesty among ministers has been greatly reduced by an increasing disregard for the sanctity of the ordination vow. It is alleged that many of them, notwithstanding the fact that they stand solemnly pledged to an acceptance of the Scriptures as true, are accustomed without scruple to hold and teach that those same Scriptures are a collection of mingled truth and falsehood, far less trustworthy than most of the reputable books in current literature. It is charged that these ministers have a terminology of their own, which they employ as counterfeiters use spurious coin ; that is by putting new meanings into old words they conceal the real purport of their thought. For example, such words as Truth, Inspiration, Incarnation, Divinity, Atonement, Vicarious, Resurrection ; words which have been in use for centuries, with a meaning so clearly and universally understood that to use them in any other sense, without explanation, would be indeed in the nature of uttering base coin. It is urged, that in consequence of this perversion of language it is im-

possible to understand what some preachers mean when they say, "I believe that the Scriptures are inspired," or "I believe that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost," or "I believe that his blood cleanseth from all sin." The intimation is that by such evasion of solemn vows and such perversion of language the level of common honesty has been reduced among the ministry to a level far below that of the market-place. If this were true, it would indeed be a most serious accusation ; but it is distinctly not true.

No doubt there are ministers against whom such offences may be justly alleged ; but shall the great body of honest, self-respecting pastors be placarded by reason of the misdoings of a certain few ? There never was a time in history when the pulpit was not invaded by unworthy men. How the Lord thundered against the false priests and prophets of the olden time ; the "idol shepherds" who led their flocks into the wilderness to die ! What fierce fulminations of wrath were uttered against those who made their holy office an occasion of self-emolument. The offense is as old as the story of Eli's recreant sons who "struck the flesh hook into the caldron and brought up for themselves." Did not the Lord himself speak of "wolves in sheep's clothing" and of "the hireling who careth not for the sheep" ? Were not the early Christians warned against false teachers who should bring reproach upon the Cross and deceive the very elect ? They were likened to "clouds without water carried about by winds"; "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots"; and to "wandering stars, to whom is re-

served the blackness of darkness forever." They were characterized as lepers, sitting at the feasts of charity, feeding themselves without fear. Nay, there is nothing singular in this condition of things. There have always been and, while sin abides, will ever be unscrupulous men in the company of the prophets, "stealing the livery of heaven to serve the devil in."

But these are relatively few and far between. It is an old saying that "three bad boys can ruin the reputation of any school." In like manner a few men in holy orders, holding with Hudibras that "oaths are but words and words but wind," may cast reproach, and do indeed, upon the entire ministry. I beg to say, however, after thirty years in this fellowship, that my respect for my brethren as a body of strong, manly, consecrated, honest men, increases from day to day. They lead as never before the moral sentiment of the world. In every crusade for genuine reform in social or political life their power is felt as was that of the priests who bore the rams' horns before the procession that compassed the walls of Jericho. And they are scrupulous as to their personal lives beyond all the precedent of former days. The dicing, bibulous, fox-hunting parson of a hundred years ago is out of vogue. The evangelical pastor of to-day is remarkably careful to keep his garments unspotted from the world. While making note of all exceptions I still insist that evangelical ministers as a body, are in point of moral character and influence, far beyond the pattern of all former days.

Let us apply, secondly, *the Doctrinal Test.* I am

aware of the fact that in certain quarters there is a disposition to minimize the importance of truth. The cry is raised, "Christianity is not dogma but life." But the average man is wise enough to see through this diaphanous sophism; he understands that life is founded on truth, since "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." One of the common maladies of our time is Credophobia. Yet no thoughtful man is unaware of the fact that *credo* is a word of tremendous power in the building of character. A creed is a collection of dogmas; and a dogma is merely the formulation of a truth. There is no "if" in the vocabulary of truth: only Yea and Amen. So long as men merely guess, they do not dogmatize; but the moment a man says, "I know," he becomes a dogmatist; yet, by that same token, he is more than ever a man. Then, too, it is the fashion of some people to sneer at "orthodoxy." The old word has had its coat turned inside out and its face smeared with phosphorus, and has been placed in the pillory as a gazingstock; and, alas! thoughtless people pass by with averted faces.

But here, again, there is nothing novel in the situation. There never has been a time in history when truth, dogma or orthodoxy was popular. Did not Isaiah lament, "Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Did not the apostles accuse the people of "having itching ears"; that is, of giving their attention to strange and false teachings? It is not strange that the doctrine of the Atonement is repellent to many people in our times. Paul spoke of it as foolishness to some and a stumbling-block to others; but he added, "We

preach Christ crucified, to them that believe the wisdom and the power of God."

Let us go further and assert that truth gets a better hearing to-day than ever before in the history of the world. The bold assaults which are made on all cardinal doctrines are in evidence. The persistent and malignant attack upon the Scriptures as the citadel of our religion is also in evidence. Men do not trouble themselves to lay siege to ruined cities or make charges on graveyards. It is conceded that many have been led away from the truth,—led into a denial not of inspiration only but of other cardinal doctrines of Christianity,—by such specious and persistent assaults. But let us withhold our tears. I will not join Elijah under his juniper tree. God reigns and the ark of his covenant is safe! It is infinitely far from the truth to say that Christians as a rule have abandoned the Scriptures or any of the landmarks of historic truth. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And he answered, "O Lord my God, thy people have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left!" And the Lord said, "Not so! I have left me seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Let us, thirdly, apply *the Ethical Test.* It is said that the Decalogue is gone out of fashion; and in some quarters this may be true. Great liberties are taken with God nowadays and with his holy law. It is not uncommon to hear it said, for example, that the Fourth Commandment has been abrogated. The wish is father to the thought. The Sunday newspaper and Sunday amusements have much to account

for. It is said, also, that the Seventh Commandment has lost much of its binding force. There is a certain "set" in which, if rumor can be trusted, a man's position is not definitely assured until he has been properly accredited in a Police Court and vouched for by a co-respondent. It is asserted, in general terms, that the line between the church and the world is obliterated in these days. It was once a bridgeless gulf; it is now a broad, invisible line, like that of the Tropics, over which a man steps without knowing it. One of the most familiar and thumb-worn of our epigrams runs on this wise: "This is a good church to belong to, because it does not interfere with a man's politics or religion." It need scarcely be said that the intimation is not true; the sorrow is that it should contain even so slight a modicum of truth as that men should tolerate and smile at it.

Let it not be supposed, however, that this condition is peculiar to our time. It was three thousand years ago that the Lord said to church members, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of goats. Bring no more vain oblations! Your incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with them. I am weary to bear them. Your hands are full of blood! Wash you, make you clean; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now, saith the Lord, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be

as wool." And how stern were the reproaches directed at the churches of Asia. To Ephesus he said, "Thou hast lost thy first love." To Pergamos, "Thou hast the doctrine of Balaam; repent or else I will come unto thee quickly!" To Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." To Laodicea, "I know thy works, how thou art neither cold nor hot; and because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth!" O, no; the complaint of inconsistency is as old as the profession of the gospel.

But I venture the opinion that there never was a time when the level of Christian character was higher than to-day. The eyes of the world are on professing Christians as never before; and the man whose practice does not tally with his profession becomes a hissing and a by-word. The Christian is a watched man; and he has a thousand ways of knowing that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. We listen to all that is said about the imperfections of church members, and then dare to assert that there never was a time when the individual Christian approximated more nearly to the definition of Pope: "A Christian is the highest style of man."

And, fourthly, we apply *the Dynamic Test.* It is said that "nine-tenths of the work of the Christian church is done by one-tenth of its members." And this is probably true. It means that by far the largest number of professing Christians are more or less ineffective. They seem to be satisfied with a passive acceptance of personal salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and give little heed to their commission as fishers of men.

But this too is an ancient complaint. Did not Meroz "abide among the sheepfolds, listening to the bleating of the flocks," while Israel was on the high places of the field? Has not the Lord from time immemorial been standing by his bride, fallen asleep in the city gate, crying, "Awake, awake, O Zion. Shake thyself from the dust; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck; and put on thy beautiful garments"? Do we forget how Christ found it necessary, in apostolic times, to apply the scourge of persecution to his indolent disciples, who would have tarried at Jerusalem while the world was dying in sin!

We shall do scant justice to the church of our time if we ignore the zeal with which she has advanced to the conquest of the world. We have spoken of new forces in the industrial life of the last century; let us not overlook the new forces which have been developed in the work of the kingdom. The Sabbath School, whose influence it is impossible to overestimate, was born but a hundred years ago; when Robert Raikes went through the streets of Gloucester, offering a shilling a day for teachers in his Ragged Schools. The Temperance Reform is less than a century old. So is Woman's Work, in its various forms. And so is the magnificent work of Foreign Missions. It was little more than a century ago that William Carey sat in his cobbler shop in Northamptonshire, his lapstone between his knees pausing while he hammered to gaze at a map of the world on his wall, saying, "God bless benighted India!" and "God save the nations that lie in darkness and the shadow of death!" It is stated that at that time there were less than three hundred con-

verts from Paganism. Now, blessed be God! the world is girdled with missionary stations, and men everywhere are planning in Christ's name to conquer the nations.

An old legend says that, in the reign of Decius, seven Christian young men fled from persecution in Ephesus and took refuge in a cave near by. Their pursuers rolled a great stone against the cave, and so it remained for above a century. Then a herdsman, searching for his cattle, rolled away the stone, and the seven sleepers came forth. They looked toward Ephesus and, behold! the cross was gleaming from many spires. They passed, bewildered, into the streets and heard men singing praises to Christ! Let us suppose that a man had fallen asleep a hundred years ago, in the time of Paine's Age of Reason and the French Encyclopedia, of the blasphemies of Voltaire and Rousseau, when the great tidal wave of infidelity swept over all Christendom, seeming almost to submerge the Churches. Were he to awake today, what surprises would greet him! Verily, the Lord hath done great things, whereof we are glad.

The practical lessons which we would emphasize are these: *First*, Let every follower of Christ refrain from criticising the Church and see that he himself is a faithful follower of Christ. There are many *minimum* Christians, still more *medium* Christians, but the demand is ever for *maximum* Christians; for such as hold themselves unreservedly at the command of their Lord, saying, "What wilt thou have me to do?" We hear much of "reformers" in our time, but the need of all needs is for individual reform; for less of criticism and more of personal consecra-

tion. Let every one sweep his own doorstep clean. And, *second*, Let us be of good courage. God will take care of his Church. He has founded it upon a rock and has declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Things are, indeed, not as they should be. The ideal will never be reached until the heavens part asunder and Christ comes to reign upon the earth. But things are vastly better than they used to be. Our world, at every revolution, comes further into the light. The King's chariot wheels cannot be hindered. He cometh to reign! The hands on his dial never turn back. "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world!"

TEN GOOD MEN IN SODOM

"Peradventure ten should be found there."—Gen. 18, 32.

At noon Abraham sat in the doorway of his tent in the plains of Mamre, when three strangers drew near, weary and travel stained; and he rose to meet them, saying: "I will fetch a morsel of bread: comfort ye your hearts." This incident is referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews where it is written: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The guests on this occasion were indeed celestial visitants, one of them being the Angel of the Covenant, a theophany, a Foregleam of Christ. They had come on a twofold errand; to renew the ancient promise to Abraham of a son to be born in fulness of time, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and also to declare the approaching doom of Sodom. The latter communication was of pathetic interest to Abraham, since his nephew, Lot, with his household, was in the fated city. At this point a singular colloquy occurred, in which Abraham reveals his reverent boldness as the "friend of God."

And he said, "Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous in the city, wilt thou destroy it? That be

far from thee, Lord, to slay the righteous with the wicked! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And the Lord said: "If I find fifty righteous within the city, I will spare it for their sakes."

And Abraham said: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt thou destroy the city for lack of five?" Here is the forwardness of a special advocate. Had he not been received into a place of peculiar privilege, he could not have ventured thus to bring forth his strong arguments before God.

And the Lord said, "If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it."

And Abraham spake yet again saying, "Peradventure there be forty found there?" Here is importunity indeed! Will the Lord lose patience with this man?

And he answered, "I will not do it for forty's sake."

And Abraham said, "O let not the Lord be angry; peradventure there be thirty found there?" Mark the directness of the prayer. There is no beating about the bush. One thing only he desires, and with all urgency he presses it.

And the Lord said, "I will spare the city if I find thirty there."

And he said, "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak; peradventure there shall be twenty found there?"

And he answered, "I will not destroy it for twenty's sake."

And he said, "Let not the Lord be angry and I will speak but yet this once: peradventure ten shall be found there?"

"I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

Then, silence.

"And the Lord went his way, and Abraham returned unto his place." Why did he not continue to plead? We may fill this parenthesis of silence with profitable thought.

First.—Here is a Question Raised; a question as to *the Justice of Divine Providence.* The case of Sodom is not singular. We live within sight and hearing of constant disaster, of storm and earthquake, of war and pestilence and conflagration. And Abraham's question is ever rising to our lips: "Why should the righteous perish with the wicked? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Let us not, however, be too sure of our own conclusions, lest we, like the patriarch, be striken dumb.

> Blind unbelief is sure to err
> And scan his work in vain;
> God is his own interpreter
> And he will make it plain.

We may be confident that the final outcome will show an infinite goodness behind the "frowning providence." Faith bids us await the drawing of the veil. An ancient saint meditating on this problem was moved to cry, "Thy righteousness is as the great mountains!" and again, "Thy judgments are a great deep!"

In the case of Sodom there are two considerations which must greatly modify our conclusion. One is *the frightful provocation.* The Lord said, "The cry

of Sodom is great and its sin is very grievous." The things which were done in Sodom have made its name a hissing and a byword to this day. Sin in every form is grievous beyond words. Its exceeding sinfulness, however, lies not in the fact that it is a painful and loathsome malady; nor in the fact that it is *dementia*, confusing all our conceptions of truth and righteousness; but in this, that, in the last reduction, it is rebellion against God. It is *anomia*, that is, transgression against perfect law. The description of Milton is quite inadequate:

> "The other shape,
> If shape it might be called that shape had none
> Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
> Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
> For each seem'd either; black it stood as night,
> Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
> And shook a dreadful dart."

He should have added, to complete the picture, that this "dreadful dart" is shaken in the face of a holy God. Sodom was a nest of treason. Its people said, "God doth not see, neither doth he consider." And, under such circumstances, it is unthinkable that his wrath should not have been aroused against them. It is a true saying, "God is angry with the wicked every day."

The other consideration which must be taken into the problem is *the longsuffering of God.* Why should he have endured the insolence of Sodom so long? Why did he bear with Tyre and Sidon, with Nineveh and Babylon, year after year, before he smote them? Nay, let us come down to the present. If you have read "The Bitter Cry of Outcast

London" did you not see everywhere between the lines, "I am the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious; slow to anger and plenteous in mercy?" In the *Sun* of last Tuesday an entire page was devoted to an exposure of an East Side portion of our city. O the vice, the drunkenness, the debauchery, of men and women and little children! And O the unspeakable guilt of magistrates who have grown rich on the red revenues of this infamy! It is indeed of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. Was he longsuffering toward the people of Sodom? How much more toward us, who sin against greater light? It is of New York that the Master says, "If the mighty works had been done in Sodom that have been done in thee, it would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes; wherefore, it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than for thee."

It is the fashion of our time to minimize sin and the retribution which follows it. No doubt you have seen a recent criticism of words used by Jonathan Edwards a hundred and fifty years ago in his well-known sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Here is the paragraph in question: "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely

more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment: it is ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you had closed your eyes to sleep; and there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up." Here is indeed an awful presentation of the divine wrath. Let it be observed, however, that in his wrath the Lord remembers mercy. The hand by which he holds the sinner over hell is the hand of offended justice; but the hand which refuses to let the sinner fall is the hand of infinite love. "It is nothing but this that holds you from falling!" Let it be remembered furthermore that the man who is thus charged with overdrawing the divine indignation is the same Jonathan Edwards who preached the gospel of divine mercy to the saving of great multitudes; and who, on one occasion, was found in his study, murmuring in a voice broken with tears, 'O the love of God! The wonderful love of God!"

It was this consideration that silenced the importunity of Abraham. Not ten righteous men in Sodom! Then was God merciful, indeed. Then was the divine justice vindicated, so that the petitioner could plead no more. There was, indeed, nothing more to say. The saints in glory, who with open eyes behold the solution of divine providence, cry, "Just and righteous art thou altogether, O Lord of Hosts!" And among those who dwell in outer darkness, self-exiled despite the Lord's longsuffering,

there is not one who can look backward and make complaint; but all alike join in saying, "The Lord is justified when he speaketh; and he is clear when he judgeth. True and righteous altogether is the Lord of Hosts!"

But, second, we find here a Principle Stated; to wit, *the Vicarious Power of Righteousness.* Had there been ten righteous men in Sodom, they would have saved the city. Who shall estimate the value of the superflux of holy lives. Homes are spared for the sake of righteous mothers; cities for the sake of righteous citizens. The ship that was tossed about by Euroclydon, in the Ægean Sea, was saved with all aboard, on account of a single passenger who was on his way to preach the gospel at Rome. Thus it is written, "Ye are the salt of the earth:" that is, a potent antiseptic to arrest an otherwise mortal putrefaction. The savor of this salt is effective in many ways.

To begin with, "*the fervent effectual prayer* of a righteous man availeth much." God hears prayer and is pleased to answer it. And Jesus spake this parable unto his disciples; "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? and he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." And the husbandman spared the tree.

The savor of the salt is manifest, also, in *the power of example.* "But if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." Actions speak louder than words. "Ye are the light of the world: let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." But if the light which is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness! A stern rebuke was administered to David, in the matter of Bathsheba, because he "had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme." In his notable prayer for pardon he pleads, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee." All his royal proclamations in behalf of righteousness, all his melodious Psalms in praise of the divine glory went for nothing. The world tires of hearing inconsistent Christians talk sweetly of Christ. "Lord, open thou my lips," he prays, "and my mouth shall show forth thy praise; then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar." His sin had closed his lips, and the Lord only could open them. He could preach no more until able to illustrate his preaching by a holy life.

The savor of the salt is further manifest in *evangelistic effort.* Let it never be forgotten that the prime business of all believers is to save men. "If I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning; the same wicked man

shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thy hand." It is a sad comment on the life and character of Lot that he had lived twenty-two years in Sodom and yet in all that city there was not one believer outside of his own household. What sermons he might have preached ! What sheaves he might have gathered had he been a faithful man ! True, it is recorded of him that he "vexed his righteous soul;" but vexing his righteous soul was not enough. At the outset, he should not have chosen to live in Sodom at all ; or, having discovered its iniquity, he should have fled as from a city afflicted with the plague; but, choosing to remain there, he should have gone up and down its streets, like Jonah in Nineveh, crying, "Repent, or this city shall be destroyed!" We are set as watchmen on the walls, to cry aloud and spare not and show the people their sins. We have power, under God, to convert sinners from the error of their ways, "and whoso converteth a sinner shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins."

The last time I saw Mr. Moody, not long before his death, he leaned across my study-table and said, "I think we are near to the greatest work of grace in all history : I can give no definite reason, except that I feel it in the very air." As the new century begins, there seems to be a moving in the tops of the mulberry trees. A fortnight ago a request was sent to thirty thousand ministers all over our country, asking that they would meet together to plead with God for an outpouring of His Spirit ; and, turning aside from all other pursuits and considerations, address themselves straightway to the saving of souls.

A man high in the councils of the Christian church said to me recently, "I fear that, amid the controversies of the last half century the ministry has lost the art of soul saving." God forbid! Let us, my brethren, turn from our devotion to science and philosophy, from apologetics and critical dogmatics, and go out after prisoners of hope. Let us emphasize the destroying power of sin, and more and more the saving power of the blood of Jesus Christ. Knowing the terror of the Lord, let us persuade men.

The commission to save souls, however, is addressed not to ministers only, but to all true followers of Christ. The words that he spake to those who were mending their nets by the side of Gennesareth, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men," were addressed to all who love and follow him. This is the business of the kingdom; and great is the promise: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever!"

The ten righteous were not found in Sodom. The prayer of Abraham was hushed by the overwhelming thought of the divine patience. "And the Lord went his way, and Abraham returned unto his place." From the heights of Bethel he saw the great catastrophe; the smoke of Sodom "ascending up as the smoke of a furnace." And on the lurid skies one word was writ large, *Justice!* "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If you have taken up your abode in Sodom, my friend, flee from it. If you are

engaged in an evil business, get out of it. If you have formed bad associations, escape from them. If you are wedded to a darling sin, break loose!

"The voice of Free Grace cries, Escape to the mountain,
For Adam's lost race Christ hath opened a fountain;
For sin and uncleanness and every trangression
His blood flows most freely in streams of salvation."

And another word shone as in golden letters against the awful background of Sodom's ruin, *Mercy!* O the boundless mercy of the patient God! As Abraham on the heights shaded his eyes, he may have seen a little group of fugitives pursuing their way along the mountain road: it was Lot and his family, "saved, so as by fire." Lot was called righteous, but only by contrast with the unrighteousness of Sodom; he was a selfish, covetous man; not free from vicious habits, unmindful of his neighbors' welfare, and training his children to shame; yet God was pleased to spare him. And Lot's wife was a poor, half-hearted creature, whose life was cut in sunder by her lingering love of sin. And his daughters live before us only in the memory of their shame. These four, the sole remnant of righteousness left in Sodom, were saved! Great was the power of Abraham's prayer. And great is the mercy of God.

A man came to see me last Monday, who said, "I attended church last night and heard you say, 'A sea of oblivion has been opened up in the Saviour's blood, in which a man may drown forever the mislived past.' Did you mean that?" I told him I meant that, and more; namely, that Christ, in forgiving a man's sins, joins himself to the forgiven sinner as a perpetual friend who can never be shaken

off. He said, "That's what I want. It's the only gleam of hope I have had for years." We knelt down and, having offered a brief prayer, I said, "Tell God for yourself." And then he made a most singular prayer: "God, I am at the end of my rope! I have wasted my life and tried in vain to retrieve it! God, I have a great thing to do, a great burden to bear; I must roll it off on you. God, you must take it! Amen." And God took it.

Here is a word of hope for every penitent. He comes to meet the prodigal while he is yet a great way off. He is ready to blot out the past and glorify the future. His word is, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And he is able to save unto the uttermost all who will come unto him.

A MAN'S A MAN

"Which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.—Luke 3, 38."

It is estimated that there are sixteen hundred millions of people in the world; and all of them have the same family tree. This may be a mortifying fact to some of us, but it is true, nevertheless. We say, "Blood is thicker than water." So it is; but there is no blood so rich in red corpuscles that makes life and character as the universal blood that flows through Seth and Adam back to God.

Is there then no difference between men? No two men are alike. But all real differences rest not on adventitious conditions but on personal attainments in virtue and usefulness.

"Its no in titles or in rank,
Its no in wealth in Lon'on bank
To purchase peace and rest:
Its no in makin' muckle mair,
Its no in books, its no in lear
To make us truly blest."

Or if one prefer a more serious prophet than Burns, here is a couplet from Pope's essay:

"Honor and shame from no condition rise,
Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

The same truth was driven home in an abrupt way by the rough prophet of the wilderness when to

certain tuft-hunters who ostentatiously claimed descent from Abraham he said, not without a curling of the lip, "God can raise up children unto Abraham from these stones."

The doctrine of Equality, resting on the solidarity of the race as enunciated in our text, is fundamental to our religion and our religious life. It furnishes a rationale for self-respect on the one hand and for mutual respect on the other; and these are the two great pillars of personal and social character.

I. *As to Self-respect.* The wise maxim of Thales, "Know thyself," is of little consequence unless it lead to another, "Respect thyself." Yet self-respect is never born of introspection, but of a backward look toward our divine birthright and an upward look to omnipotent grace.

No matter how far a man may wander in the far country he cannot escape the consciousness that he came forth from God. One of the Greek philosophers spoke of man as "a windwhirl." We look down the road on a windy day and see yonder the dust rising in a spiral column and sweeping onward out of sight; so is human life. We accept the definition with such qualifications as these: The dust of which we are framed was most cunningly manipulated by a divine Creator so that one may say of his bodily frame, "It is fearfully and wonderfully made"; and the wind that animates it is divine breath, as it is written, "God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Furthermore, the dust-whirl, passing out of sight, has not passed out of being; as it is written, "The dust

shall return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." So that, back from the invisible region into which it has passed, there comes an inspiring word, "Now are we sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be!"

And because a man is thus divinely born and constituted, he is sovereign in his own right. Of all creatures he alone is free. The sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race; but his race is ever along the course marked out. The moon and planets are bondslaves of gravity, never swerving an hair's breadth from their orbits. The sea yields an implicit obedience to a voice saying, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed!" The wind bloweth where it listeth; but even in its most boisterous moods it sweeps along the path of least resistance. Man alone can disobey the laws of his being and defy the Law-giver. He may plan for himself, originate, and answer God's "Thou shalt," with an obstinate, "I will not," and take the consequences. Thus the very sin by which he is alienated from God is proof positive of his divine birthright. He is sovereign because he is created in the likeness of the sovereign God.

And being sovereign, he is in a most real sense the architect of his own fortunes. His life and character are what he makes them. He has a fair start and an equal chance with others. It is true that he is handicapped on the one hand by heredity and on the other by environment. Yet there is less in heredity than one would think; since there can be little or no difference in the average inheritance from

the long line. The hot blood of sin runs equally through the veins of all. My immediate forebears may have dealt ill with me, but God makes allowance for this; "Ye shall no more use the proverb, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge; for as I live, saith the Lord, the soul that sinneth, it shall die." It must be remembered also that, in his last extremity, a man can always fall back on the help of his remotest ancestor; that is, God.—The influence of environment also is greatly overestimated. It can scarcely be a more dominating factor in one life than in another; since all are confronted by the world, the flesh and the devil. No man is a creature of circumstance, unless he so wills it. The mark of true greatness is to get the better of one's circumstances. It is no singular thing for lilies to grow out of the mire. When Pericles crowned the slave Creon for artistic skill, he said, "Here is a marvelous thing." Yet this marvelous thing is happening all the while. Sons of the peerage are lost in the rabble; and the peerage is recruited again from the ranks of cobblers and apothecaries. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves that we are underlings."

So then a man is, under God, what he makes himself. The accidentals of his life have little to do with it. When Frederick of Prussia heard that William Pitt had been made Earl of Chatham, he said, "It is a bad exchange; the world knows William Pitt for what he has been and accomplished; but as for this Earl of Chatham, who is he?"

II. As to the influence of this doctrine of human

equality on our *Mutual Respect.* We have much to say, in these times, about Social Science and Social Economics. The problems which most engage our attention are those relating to social life. And the determining factor in the solution of all such problems is the Equality of Man.

Let us begin with the Home-life, which is the innermost circle. What a difference it would make in the status of our domestic affairs were the lady of the household to recognize the fact that her maids in service are her natural equals. Even in most Christian households I think the suggestion would be regarded as a social heresy. Yet the fairy tale of Cinderella is but a lighter version of the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, in which he entreats that the slave Onesimus be received "not as a servant but above a servant, a brother beloved." Here is a proposition that would revolutionize our domestic affairs; but it would be quite in line with the gospel, which speaks on this wise, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all."

This truth has a distinct bearing also on the Labor problem; I mean as to the right relations of master and man. It is true employees are mere "hands" to their employer who is head; yet they are alike members of the body and equally honorable. The last words of Judge Talfourd, who had devoted his life to a right adjustment of labor and capital, were these: "If I were asked what is the great want of English society to-day, I should say it is the want of sympathy between masters and men." Strikes and lockouts are expressions of this lack of sym-

apathy; and they will never cease until there is due consideration on both sides of the great truth of equality, and until the teaching of the Carpenter of Nazareth shall prevail, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Let this truth have way in "Society" and what a turning and overturning there would be! No doubt there is room for social distinctions; but not according to the standards which prevail in many quarters. The only "aristocracy" for which there is room, is that which is suggested by the primitive meaning of the word, to wit, "the best people." There is an aristocracy which is founded on personal merit and attainment. The mischief is that divisional lines as they exist are of a very different sort. We cry out against the institution of caste in India, because its influence is repressive every way. There are four orders there: the Brahmans, created from the head of Brahm, the Kshatryas from his breast, the Vaisyas from his loins and the Sudras from his feet. The walls of partition are impassable. The scavengers of Cawnpur are the children of those who were scavengers in Cawnpur a thousand years ago. Under such conditions, what hope or ambition can there be? But India is not alone in such social differentiations. How much better is it in England with her four orders: Royalty, Nobility, Gentry and Yeomanry? Nor are we in a position to lift our eyebrows at nations beyond the sea; for, notwithstanding the fact that we hold avowedly to the doctrine of human equality, we divide ourselves asunder by the most superficial considerations, such as pride of birth, pride of learning, pride of wealth. The dig-

nity of man as man is measurably lost in our regard for crests (God save the mark!) and diplomas and decorations. We boast of our Democracy, and do obeisance to the sons of parvenus. We revere the memory of the Pilgrim Fathers, not one of whom was above the rank of a yeoman, and then invent coats of arms by which to certify that we are descended from them. We hate caste, yet strangely covet it.

The same principle applies in our Political life. No more important manifesto has ever been issued than that contained in the preamble of our Declaration of Independence: "All men are created free and equal and with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The equality here referred to is such as inheres in our divine birthright; that is, we are created equal. The corollary is manhood suffrage; which means that every citizen is a stockholder and profit-sharer in the *res-publica*. The *reductio ad absurdum* is in the discussion which has been going on in Congress for a fortnight as to whether or no any action should be taken, under the requirements of our Constitution, with reference to the fact that ten millions of our fellow citizens have been disfranchised on account of their color! The ominous significance of this event lies not so much in its violation of the letter of the Constitution as in the fact that it is in direct contravention of the great principle for which we stand as a people; to wit, that men are equal before God and equal in the possession of such natural rights as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. So long as we are untrue to that fundamental fact, a fact

which is the very breath of our national life, there must be trouble brewing. The inference is plain; it behooves us to face the problem not only in loyalty to our republican traditions but in obedience to the behest of God.

It is in the Church, however, that we should expect to find the supreme and perfect expression of this doctrine. The church is itself an aristocracy; but only in the etymological sense. It is a body called out of the world (ecclesia) to cherish the best and truest. The "calling," however, is of divine grace, and herein all are equal, since all are but sinners saved by grace. There is no room, therefore, for distinctions of rank or title in the church. There is no franchise for a rich church or a poor church. Nor in any individual church is there warrant for distinction between rich and poor; as it is written, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10, 12). There can be no misunderstanding at this point: "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves and become judges of evil thoughts?" (James 2, 2–4). The church is the one commune on earth. Here "the rich and poor meet together, and the Lord is maker of them all." We sing, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love"; but, while we are singing,

let us make sure that there is nothing of patronage or of condescension in our regard for those who are one with us in the household of faith. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5, 6).

And finally the truth enunciated in our text has a distinct bearing on our attitude as Citizens of the World. Sin has been justly defined as a disturbance of right relations; that is, of our relations with God, with ourselves and with our fellow men. The purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to readjust these relations by destroying sin. To this end he taught us to say, "Our Father"; and in those words is contained the sum total of his teaching, even of that voiceless sermon on the cross when he stretched out his hands for salvation to all the children of men. The souls of all are equally precious to him. He is no respecter of persons. He tasted death for every man; for tramps, beggars and pariahs, as well as for the rich and learned. Kings and shepherds met at his cradle, rabbis and the rabble gathered under his cross. He was born a peasant, toiled as a handicraftsman, lived a man of the people, and died for all sorts and conditions of men.

And just here is the basis of Missions. There is no difference between home and foreign missions. The man whom I jostle in the crowd, whom I never met before and shall not meet again, is my kinsman. So is the man at the antipodes, who is at this moment burning incense before the altar of his Joss. The vicinage has nothing to do with it.

It was appropriate that Paul, who had been a bigot of the narrowest sort, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, transformed by his vision of Christ and sent forth as missionary to the nations, should trumpet this truth: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon the face of the earth!" Our commission is, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." How could it be otherwise, since every creature to the remotest corners of the earth is my kinsman by birth and doubly bound to me by ties of blood, the blood of human nature and the sacrificial blood of Christ? *Noblesse oblige!* A sense of noble birth leads to a noble obligation.

One of the most tragic figures in Scripture is that of Cain fleeing redhanded from the divine presence. It is the voice of paternal love that calls after him, "Cain where is thy brother?" And it is the voice of all social, political and ecclesiastical recreancy that answers back, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The brand upon the forehead of that fugitive is "Self"; and every self-isolated soul is a Cainite. There is no more convincing argument as to the power of sin in the disturbance of normal relations than that which we hear in the frequent words, "I do not believe in Foreign Missions."

Set over against that figure of Cain the more tragic figure of Christ, coming from heaven to readjust our disturbed and troubled life. Hear his words, "And when ye pray say, '*Our* Father.'" Recall his life written in the brief monograph, "He went about doing good." He knew no difference between souls created in God's likeness. To him all men were sinners alike and all alike possible sons of God. "Let the mind that was in Christ Jesus be also in you."

LIGHT OR DARKNESS; A QUESTION OF STANDPOINTS

"And the pillar of cloud went from before their faces and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of the Israelites; and it was a cloud of darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these."—Exodus 14, 19, 20.

The reference is to the pillar of cloud in which God made himself manifest. In the Targums it is called the Shekinah; but in the Scriptures it is variously characterized as "the Glory," "the Presence" and "the Pillar." It appears in the oldest book of the Scriptures as a whirlwind, out of which God speaks to Job, saying, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me" (Job 37, 1–3).—On the departure of the Israelites from the land of Egypt, "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire to lead them the way." This cloud was seen just above the Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy-seat, where the Lord had promised to make himself known to his worshiping people (Num. 9, 15–23).—And it is mentioned again at the dedication of the temple. The king stood in the presence of the assembled multitude while the weather-beaten Ark of the Covenant was brought up and reverently placed

"in the oracle of the house." And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the Holy Place, "the cloud filled the house so that they could not stand to minister because of it, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house" (I. Kings 8, 10).

The cloud reappears in the New Testament at the time of the Advent, when, as the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks in the fields, the Angel of the Lord came down and "the glory of the Lord shone round about them," and the song was heard, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men" (Luke 2, 9).—And again when Jesus went up into the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter and James and John; the cloud overshadowed them (Mark 9, 7), to which Peter referred thirty years later on this wise: "He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (II. Pet. 1, 17).—And finally at the close of our Lord's ministry, when he met his disciples on Olivet to say farewell; "Behold, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1, 9).

Our attention is directed in the text to a singular fact, connected with this cloud at the crossing of the Red Sea. The people were in a panic because they could hear the footfall of the approaching host of Egypt; and Moses said, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of God." Then the pillar of cloud rose from before them, and began to move slowly and majestically backward along the sky, taking its position midway between them and their pursuers. And to the Egyptians it was dark as midnight; but

to Israel it shone like a burnished shield casting its light before them to guide the way.

We find a suggestion here of the bifrontal character of all spiritual truth. It is difficult to see how God could reveal himself or any of the great verities which center in him except with a penumbra of mystery. The possibility of apprehending truth must ever carry with it an alternative of misconception; that which giveth a savor of life unto life giveth also a savor of death unto death. The truth which is light to one is darkness to another; and whether it be light or darkness is wholly a question of standpoint. It is well for truth-seekers to take this into the reckoning: it is a matter of supreme importance whether they stand with the Egyptians or with the people of God.

Let us take, to begin with, *the supreme truth; to wit, God himself*. It is of preëminent importance that we should find him, since "this is life eternal, to know God." It is easy to speak his name; but how difficult to apprehend the content of it. It is easy to say, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence; but when we try to comprehend their meaning, it is like grasping a handful of air. God "dwelleth in light unapproachable." If he reveal himself at all, it must be in an adumbration, in some form adjusted to human eyes. We search after him and the horizons retreat at our approach. We cry, "O that I knew where I might find him." We are like blind men feeling their way along the wall. Now and then one of the earnest company cries, "I have found him and his name is Law"; but this somehow does not satisfy us. And another cries, "I have found him;

he is the All-pervading Soul of the universe"; but this also is inadequate. And others, baffled, build an altar and inscribe upon it, "To the unknown God." Nor can any better result be looked for so long as we pursue our quest by the light of reason alone. "Canst thou by searching find out God?"

But change the standpoint: Come over among his people; and lo, the cloud that was darkness is bright as day. For Christ is standing among us, "the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; as it is written, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten Son of the Father." His name is Emmanuel, God with us. He says of himself: "No man hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He teaches us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." And, looking on his face, we behold all that humanity can apprehend of the nature and attributes of the invisible and ineffable One.

The same holds with reference to *our view of the Divine Word.* Here there is a vast divergence of opinion. Are the Scriptures what they claim to be, a veritable and inerrant statement of God's mind and will, or are they a mingled tissue of truth and falsehood? Everything depends on the standpoint. To those who irreverently approach the Oracles they present an unbroken front of darkness. The Bible is "literature," and nothing else. It is precisely as when, at the taking of Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was opened by Titus: he was curious to know why the Jews viewed it with such superstitious reverence; but, on throwing open the wooden chest,

he cried in amazement, "There is nothing in it!" So would the burning bush have seemed to Moses had he torn it asunder in a spirit of irreverent curiosity to discover why it burned and was not consumed.

But how different the Bible seems to those who sit reverently at the Master's feet. That which was darkness to Egypt is indeed light to Israel. The Lord speaks: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and these are they which testify of me." It is plain now that the Bible without Christ is only a hemisphere, and needs him to complete it. The Incarnate Word is the complement of the Written Word; and together they make the perfect sphere of divine revelation. Christ himself the best argument for the inspiration of the Scriptures. He reasons with reverent learners as he did with the two disciples who accompanied him to the village of Emmaus, when, "beginning at Moses and the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." His face shines forth from every page; his name is written between the sacred lines.

So, also, as to *the Doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty.* "Whom God foreknew, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." We are standing in the house of the potter as he forms a vessel on the wheel; the vessel being marred in his hands, he casts it away among the useless shards. And he maketh again another vessel, as it seemeth good unto the potter to make it. And a voice is heard, "May

not the potter do what he will with the clay?" This is indeed an hard saying; who shall hear it?

But cross over and stand with Christ. He is saying to the multitudes, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And again, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Come! come! come! It is the refrain of his discourse. And again the cloud that was as darkness shines like a sunrise. This word of invitation is the best disquisition on the divine decrees. It means that, whatsoever view may be taken of predestination, there is no man living who is not free to accept the offer of eternal life. It makes us the architects of our own fate, else the Son of God was but mocking the bondage of those whom he called to deliverance. His offer of salvation is to the uttermost; "All," "Whoever," "Whosoever will, let him come."

Or take the Doctrine of the Divine Providence. We dwell in a very tempest of mingled and conflicting forces; war and peace, pain and pleasure, weeping and laughter, the wicked exalted and the righteous cast down. How shall we solve the mystery? To those who stand on the dark side of the cloud it is inexplicable. They are perplexed as was the author of Ecclesiastes; "I applied my heart to search and to find out wisdom and the reason of things; and, behold, one thing happeneth to the fool and to the wise man"; all alike are buffeted by fate. "What is better for a man therefore, than to eat and drink and delight himself in the sight of his eyes? Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

But let a man come over to the Godward side, and the bright light is over him. He stands with Jesus on the slopes of Olivet, hearing him say, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe ye, O ye of little faith?" So, then, the other name of Providence is the loving, caring God. And again: "Consider the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" What does this mean?

> "Howl, winds of night, your force combine;
> Without his high behest,
> Ye shall not in the mountain pine
> Disturb the sparrow's nest!"

God sitteth as a refiner of silver. If he be for us, who shall be against us? All things work together for good to them that love God.

As to our view of the *Divine Holiness*, furthermore, the standpoint is equally important. No truth is more repellant than God's holiness to the natural man. It is like the brightness of the sun, which, when converged into the white solar ray, is dark by very reason of its brightness, and blinding to the eyes. Isaiah, after his vision of the Lord sitting upon his throne, with the Seraphims crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a

people of unclean lips; and mine eyes have seen the King." A similar vision must ever amaze and bewilder us. It was natural that Adam, on sinning, should flee at once and hide himself from the face of God.

But when a sinful man, coming out from the fellowship of Egypt under the power of divine grace, takes his position with Christ, the divine holiness becomes as attractive to him as it was previously repellent; since in Christ he perceives that his high destiny is to become partaker of it. This is the meaning of that rending of the veil which occured when Jesus on his cross cried, "It is finished!" By the rending of that veil a new and living way was opened up into the Holiest of All; as it is written, "We have therefore boldness to enter into the Holiest of All by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." In the inner place of the Lord's pavilion we find the mercy-seat sprinkled with blood; and there, bowing before him in the gospel of reconciliation, we hear his word, "Be ye holy for I am holy!" The highest thought of which the Christian is capable thenceforth is that ultimately he shall be like God, since he shall see him as he is.

We now turn to the *Divine Law.* At Sinai there were such tokens of God's majesty as were never seen elsewhere. The mountain was all aflame and the earth shook and trembled; the darkened sky was rent with vivid flashes of lightning; the trumpet waxed louder and louder; a line was drawn around the base of the mountain to prevent intrusion, and if even a dumb creature crossed this limit it must be

thrust through with a dart. So terrible was the appearance of the divine justice in the giving of the holy Law. And the people stood afar off, saying to Moses, "Speak thou to us and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die!" The Law of itself is terrible because it is implacable. Well may a sinful man be terrified; since the penalty is this: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

But how different does the Law appear to those who sit learning at the feet of Jesus. He summarizes the Law in two Commandments, to wit, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Love, then, is the fulfilling of the Law. We are no longer galley-slaves bound to the oar, but children in the household of a kind Father, whose precepts we observe because we love him. We are not bondmen building pyramids to the glory of an arbitrary Pharaoh; but devotees of righteousness, running in the way of the divine ordinances, because we have entered into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

And, *finally, as to the Gospel.* We stand at Calvary, gazing with fleshly eyes. What is it we see? A man dying. "The people stand beholding," and we among them. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Here are some who say, "He was a reformer, who undertook to realize a dream of moral betterment and suffered the fate of all reformers; gathering into his devoted breast the shafts of the adversary, he fell." Others are saying, "Here is a malefactor, suffering the just penalty of his sins."

But there is another viewpoint which brings us into a clear apprehension of the saving truth. "We

did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, but—but he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and by his stripes we are healed." The burden of sin under which his heart is breaking is my sin. The blessing which he pronounces with his pierced hands outstretched, is a blessing of pardon for me. Thus the great truth of salvation, which is foolishness to the Greek and to the Jew a stumbling-block, is to them that are saved the wisdom and the power of God.

It would appear, therefore, that all apprehension of truth is determined by our attitude toward it. The sweetest and profoundest verities have in them a savor of life unto life and likewise of death unto death. Christ himself is set for the rising and falling of many. The Three Chosen who went up with Christ into the Mount of Transfiguration were dazed and bewildered when the cloud closed around him; and "they feared when they entered into it." But so profoundly were they impressed by the things which happened while they were communing with Jesus in the cloud, that they presently said, "Master, it is good to be here; let us build three tabernacles and abide in this place!"

If we would solve the great problems that make for life and character and salvation, we must have our eyes touched by the Spirit and anointed with eyesalve that we may see. The only door into truth is he who said, "I am the Truth," and "I am the door." If once we enter into fellowship with him, seeing with his eyes, our path shall thenceforth be like the pathway of the sun, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

THE JOY OF THE LORD

"These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."—John 15, 11.

In the archives of Great Britain there is a report of an old-time Chancellor of the Exchequer in which this item occurs: "To the Jester; For making the King laugh; One sovereign." It is quite possible that the money was well spent. We are wont to say, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown"; but there are many crownless heads that lie on sleepless pillows; and it is a priceless service to comfort them. Blessed are they who, passing through the Valley of Baca, make it a well; who dissipate grief and plant seeds of gladness in the furrows of care.

But there is a sorrow which no Court Jester can alleviate, a sorrow that lies deeper than tears, a sorrow that can only be assuaged by the clear waters that gush from the smitten Rock of Ages. The presence of Christ cheers us in our dreariest hours, makes tolerable the sorest burden and bitterest pain, gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Come to him, my friend, in your trouble, and

> "The night shall be filled with music;
> And the cares that infest the day
> Shall fold their tents like the Arabs
> And as silently steal away."

It was a sad company that gathered in the upper room on the night before the crucifixion. The shadow of death was over them; and Jesus preached a wonderful sermon to cheer them up. It was at the close of the meeting, when he was walking with his disciples to the garden of Gethsemane, that he said, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."

What were "these things"? For surely the Lord of consolation knew precisely what to say in such an hour. He had spoken to them of his approaching death; and "their hearts were filled with sorrow," which he vainly sought to relieve by the assurance that he was going to reassume "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was."

But there was comfort in the announcement of his great bequest: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." How gracious in the great Testator thus to open his last Will and Testament before he went his way!

And there was comfort also in the assurance of his abiding presence: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you"; an assurance afterwards emphasized in the words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This presence was realized in the gift of his Spirit, of whom he said, "He shall abide with you forever," and, "He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."

And there was comfort, furthermore, in his revelation of the glorious Heaven which he was intending

to prepare for them: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

And still another of the comforting things was with reference to the right of petition which they were to have in their season of waiting: "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you; and whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you."

But the realization of these promises was wholly conditioned on their loyalty to him. He had just given them the parable of the Vine and its Branches; in which was emphasized the importance of their abiding in him. This was, perhaps, the most important of the things which he had spoken unto them, to the end "that his joy might remain in them and that their joy might be full."

The expression here is singular. The fulness of their joy is only to be accomplished by the incoming of his joy. In the Parable of the Talents the Lord is represented as saying to each of his faithful servants, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here is something beyond the delights of common life. Jesus was the happiest of men; and we shall know the secret of a happy life when the joy of the Lord abides in us. But what is this joy?

First. The Joy of Jesus was in a clear vision of truth. He saw things as they are. The solution of all great problems was present to his mind. The misery of our life lies largely in our uncertainty

as to spiritual and eternal things. Peter Pindar wrote,

> "The sages tell us, Truth delights to dwell,
> (Strange mansion!) at the bottom of a well;
> And questions are the windlass and the rope
> That draw the grave old gentlewoman up."

Our life is full of queries as to the things that lie beyond; but Christ had need to ask no questions; He knew. He did indeed, during his earthly life, waive the full exercise of his divine prerogative of omniscience; but never so that he was liable to doubt or perplexity or in danger of speaking error. He "laid his glories by"; but only as a king may lay his crown here and his scepter there, yet always within reach. He might not use his omniscience at every moment; but he had only to lift his eyes and lo, the illimitable landscape of truth was before him!

If we are, at this point, to enter into our Lord's joy, it must be by implicit faith in him. And faith means to take him precisely at his word. When he asserts the immortality of the soul, all controversy ends for us; and we can no more enquire, "If a man die, will he live again?" When he affirms an overruling Providence in the care of birds and flowers and, vastly more, of us, there is no longer room to question whether all things work together for our good. When he declares the truth of Scripture as the veritable Word of God, it is recreancy to lend an ear to any denial of its inerrancy. And when he points forward to a reunion in our Father's house, the darkness of the open grave must have no terrors for those who believe in him. We, as disciples, sit at his feet, learning of him. He unties for us the

Gordian knot of every mystery. He puts within our hands "the golden key that opes the palace of eternity." He places to our lips the living waters of truth. His word of authority, "Verily, verily I say unto you" is met by the quick response of certainty within us, "I know." And herein is unspeakable joy; for, as Lord Bacon said, "There is no pleasure comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth."

Second. The Joy of the Lord was in a perfect self-respect. Is there one who says, "I am a moral man"? I pray you, friend, hide your face or it will betray you. Sin shames a man; it drives him out naked to dwell among the tombs. He dare not look into his mirror fixidly lest the eyes that gaze back upon him accuse and abash him.

But Christ was without sin. There was no guile on his lips, nor guile in his heart. He was sensible of absolute rectitude. He never felt a pang of conscience. He never was ashamed to face another man because he had wronged him. He never shunned solitude for fear of being disgraced by his own companionship. He never dreaded the sight of the blue sky because it spoke of the unflecked holiness of God. His challenge was, "Who layeth anything to my charge?" And, behold, there was none to answer him.

If we would enter into the fellowship of this joy of the Lord, it must be through winning back our self-respect by imitating his manner of life. "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." We speak of "self-

culture" and of "spiritual culture"; but there is none except in reverently gazing on Christ and following in his steps. This means to avoid the sins that he hated and cultivate the graces that entered so gloriously into his character. Had Peter remembered this he would not have tarried in the outer court, warming his hands at a fire kindled by his Master's foes, but would have pushed his way into the judgment hall to stand beside him. We follow Christ afar off, and therefore deny him. We deny him, and then he turns his eyes reproachfully upon us, and we go out and weep bitterly. We shame ourselves by lack of fealty to him. Our growth in grace is measured by the return of our self-respect as we more and more closely follow him. Thus the Lord's joy becomes our joy. For Dryden said truly, "Virtue is its own reward"; and Horace, "The garment of virtue, though it be rags and tatters, will keep me warm."

Third: Our Lord's Joy lay in the consciousness of duty done. He came from heaven on a definite errand, being sent of the Father to die for the world's sin. He was in perfect harmony with this divine purpose; as he said, "Here am I, send me; I rejoice to do thy will." His was the obedience of love. His soul was in it; his body was in it. Day and night unwearingly he addressed himself to his task. He thought of it, dreamed of it.

Long and weary was the journey from the manger to the cross; but Jesus plodded on; never swerving an hair's breadth, though the shadow of the cross was over him. He never repined. He never complained of the roughness of the way. He never

shrank from the bitterness of his doom, save once, when in Gethsemane he put the purple cup from his lips, crying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this pass from me!" And even then he showed his perfect acquiescence when he added, "If it be not possible, thy will be done!"

So he came to Calvary, and made bare his arm to the mighty task. As he hung between heaven and earth, uplifting on his devoted heart the burden of the world's sin, the Tempter cried, "Come down!" But he was doing a great work and could not come down. He suffered on until with a mighty cry, "It is finished!" he yielded up the ghost;—and never in all history lived another who could say, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do."

In order to participate in this joy of the Lord we must scrupulously obey him. We are "sent," as really as he was. Did he not say, "As the Father hath sent me into the world, so send I you?" His joy was in his perfect accord with the Father's plan. We share in that joy only as we enter into sympathy with Christ in his strong endeavor for the salvation of souls. But, alas! we forget our errand. We are like messenger boys who turn aside to play along the way. The Lord finds us in the market-place and says reproachfully, "Why stand ye here idle all the day? Lift up your eyes and see; behold, the fields are white unto the harvest! Here is thy sickle; go, reap for God." We must not be diverted. Sanballat and Tobiah are ever saying to the builders on the walls, "Come down and confer with us." But we are doing a great work, and we cannot come down. Just here, in calm and loyal per-

sistence in faithful service, lies the secret of spiritual peace.

One more day's work for Jesus;
One less of life for me!
But heaven is nearer,
And Christ is dearer,
Than yesterday to me.
O blessed work for Jesus,
O rest at Jesus' feet!
There toil seems pleasure;
My wants are treasure,
And pain for Him is sweet.
Lord, if I may,
I'll serve another day.

Fourth. The Joy of the Lord was in large measure due to his great hope. It had been prophesied of him, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." He knew the end from the beginning. He foresaw the scourge, the crown of thorns, the agony of Golgotha; but beyond the cross he saw, as in a constant vision, a great multitude redeemed from death as the fruit of the travail of his soul: and he heard them crying, "Worthy art thou to receive honor and glory and power and dominion; for thou was slain and hast redeemed us, out of every nation and kindred and people and tribe, and hast made us to be kings and priests unto God!" What was pain to him? What were sorrow and loneliness? He could pass through the midnight of divine abandonment, could drink the bitterest dregs of the cup of anguish on his way to such triumph. He was glad because he knew. He agonized; but, even in his agony, the joy of the eternal hope swept over him.

And he would share that joy with us. But such participation is impossible unless we also have the upward look. The familiar saying, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," is not true. We wander forth, oftentimes, like David among the fastnesses of the mountains, mourning, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" And life is not worth living, until we can rally our lost courage with the cry, "Hope thou in God! For I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

Ours is indeed "the hope that maketh not ashamed." We look forward to a great apocalypse when truth shall be unveiled. "Now we see as in a glass darkly, but then face to face." O rare surprise! It shall be as Balboa stood on the heights of the mountains with the Pacific rolling before him. "In that day ye shall know."

And the time is coming when we shall also regain our self-respect; when sin shall be dropped, like a travel-stained garment, and we shall put on the fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of saints.

And in that day we shall realize also the joy of duty done. We shall return no more from vain journeys and unfulfilled commissions to mourn, "We have left undone that we should have done." It is written that there "his servants shall serve him."

Thus at length our joy shall be full. This was our Lord's desire concerning us; not only that his joy should remain in us but that our joy should be full. Our capacity is, indeed, not equal to his. A gourd will not hold as much as a well; but, please

God, when I have filled my gourd at his well, his joy and mine shall be equally full.

And this is the secret of a happy life. The world speaks of pleasure as its "highest good;" and men are everywhere singing L'Allegro:

> "Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful Jollity;
> Sport, that wrinkled Care derides
> And Laughter holding both his sides.
> Come and trip it as ye go
> On the light fantastic toe!"

But what are the pleasures of the world to this joy of the Lord? The clink of glasses, the rattle of dice, the sweetness of Sodom fruit, laughter like the crackling of thorns; how transient they are! But the joy of the Lord is a peace that passeth understanding and abideth forever.

It was not strange that Paul and Silas sang in the prison at Philippi. They had followed the Lord in service and now were sharing in his joy. Their backs were smarting from the scourge, the dungeon was dark, but they sang, "and the prisoners heard them." Perhaps they sang, "God is our refuge and our strength; therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Or, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Or perhaps—for they might hear the footfall of the executioner at daybreak—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Thus the Lord giveth songs in the night.

O taste and see that the Lord is good! There are moments in the Christian life when, alone with him, our heads are anointed with oil and our cup runneth over. But the sweetest moment that a Christian ever knows is but a cluster of grapes plucked from the vineyards of that Land of Promise to which we go. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But this we know, "In his presence is fulness of joy: at his right hand are pleasures forevermore."

THE WASTE OF POWER

"But surely I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord."—Micah 3, 8.

This man was not an egotist, as one might suppose; since, while sensible of the possession of power, he acknowledged his dependence on the Lord who gave it. He lived and labored in the reign of Hezekiah the reformer, with whom he cordially sympathized in all his efforts to elevate the national churches. The book bearing his name is bold, abrupt, in places obscure, but always full of a lofty spirit of fearless righteousness. It was in vindication of his right to speak with authority, as against the assumptions of false priests and prophets, that he cried insistently, "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord!" This, I say, was not egotism; but the expression of a most admirable self-respect, due to a consciousness of holy purpose and responsibility. Would that we were all able to speak in like manner! The apostle Paul, a man of the same pattern, while humbly conscious of his own shortcoming, yet bracing himself against the divine omnipotence, could say, "When I am weak then am I strong; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!"

Our lesson is in the province of Dynamics; and we start with the proposition that *God is the source of*

all power. It is easy to say, "Omnipotence"; but what illimitable voyages of exploration are contained in it. "God hath spoken once, yea, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." This means more than that nothing is too hard for him. In all the universe there is no atom of energy which does not have its source and center in him.

His power is immeasurable. What pigmies we are beside him! "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?" Get all your athletes together, with ropes and pulleys and mighty engines, and let them try to move one of the planets a single inch from its appointed groove. How preposterous! Yet God is pushing all the multitudinous orbs in the infinite field of space along their orbits with ease. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold; he bringeth out the host of heaven by number; he calleth them all by name." Hear the mighty roll-call; "Orion!" and Orion answers, "Here I am!" He summons Arcturus and his sons, and they fall into line. "For that he is strong in power, not one faileth" (Isaiah 40, 26).

His power is inexhaustible. He is always giving out, like the sun, yet giving doth not impoverish nor withholding enrich him. We are told by scientists that the sun is burning up; the incandescent mass, shining through its photosphere, furnishes all our heat and light; and it is estimated that its surface to a depth of fourteen miles is consumed annually in doing so. It is apparent, therefore, that its entire consumption is merely a question of time. There is no occasion for alarm, however, since the sun, being a million and a half times larger than our earth, will

last for some millions of æons. And were all the suns in the sidereal system to be reduced to nothingness, there would still be no ground for misgiving, since back of these and all other depositories of power is the omnipotent God, the inexhaustible source and fountain of all.

Our next observation is that *man is not only a depository of energy but a viceregal master of it.* In this he is, indeed, not sovereign but an agent of God. The word by which the Romans characterized the dignity of man, *vir*, is cognate with *vis*, meaning strength. their idea being that man is himself a power. In fact he has no energy which is not divinely entrusted in him. He is lord of the natural forces, as he has dominion over the lower orders of life, by God's appointment (Gen. 1, 26); but he can create no atom of power. To assert this would be to deny the scientific fact of the conservation of energy, to wit, that the sum total of material force in existence is a fixed quantity. No new force is created: but man is a potent manipulator of energy, in that he can transmute one kind of power into another and make indefinite applications of it. If Franklin or Morse had made a volt of electricity, he would have attained a glory never yet accorded to man. As it is, we speak of them, and of Watt and Stephenson and other manipulators of power, as "wizards"; and they are entitled to that designation, because they have laid hold on untamed forces, such as electricity and steam, and harnessed them to common uses. Let it be understood, however, that all their ingenuity is exhausted in transforming one sort of energy into another, and making new adjustments and applications of it.

But this is not a dissertation on mechanics. *It is not of material but of moral energy that I desire to speak;* that is, of the energy which can be transmuted into virtue, character and usefulness. It has pleased God to make the humblest of men a reservoir of such energy: and with it, of necessity, comes the responsibility of its proper use. There is no searching of a man's power. We are able to apprehend truth, to reason about the eternal verities, to influence our fellow men and to glorify God.

It is impossible to measure the energy thus reposed in us. No man has ever yet been morally exhausted. We can measure our physical strength; the striking power of our biceps muscle, the lifting power of back and limbs; but we cannot estimate the possibilities of our souls. And herein there is a vast difference between moral and material energy. The unit of measurement in mechanics is horsepower; and the potency of an engine can be determined to the fraction of an ounce. But no dynamometer has ever been invented to measure the moral energy of a man.

The question arises, *What becomes of this vast deposit of moral energy?* And this brings us to the practical point. It is obvious that the human race, made up of units, each endowed with unlimited power, is capable of magnificent achievements. Let us suppose for a moment that all the moral power of the sixteen hundred millions of people on earth, made in God's likeness and thus splendidly endowed, were developed and exerted to the utmost, what a world ours would be! Yet, in fact, how inadequate the results! How little there is to show for all this endowment! What then becomes of it?

The major part of it is latent. It is mere potency and never becomes power in its real sense. A man is like a factory adjusted to work; wheels, belts and pulleys all in place; fire in the furnaces; the vast machinery in motion, but turning out no grist.—Or a man is like Niagara, which they say has power enough, if properly utilized, to operate all the industries of our country; but it rolls on in furious indolence, pouring over its rocky shelf, rising in floating mist, with only its faint rainbow to symbolize the glorious suggestion of what might be.—Or a man is like the flurry of snow which fell yesterday in our streets; of which the scientists say that every flake is possessed of immeasurable potency; yet on my way hither I saw workmen shoveling it into carts to be cast away.

Let us look at manhood from the standpoint of utilitarians. What a waste of power there is in this dormancy; and what a reckoning there must be when the God of power shall demand an account of the possibilities which were reposed in us! For "power to the last atom is responsibility"; it has value only for what it will do. We are a vast procession of agents, bearing bundles of latent energy, journeying through a field of action calling for infinite endeavor, and dropping only a fagot here and there as we pass on.

And of the small modicum of power which we do put forth, *by far the more considerable part is waste.* We waste our energy in fret and worry, in bearing needless burdens, in dreams and visions and vain speculations. We waste it in "carrying coals to Newcastle," in "letting empty buckets into empty wells

and drawing nothing up," in building castles in the air.

But worse, we make a lavish outlay of our energy on vice. We tire ourselves out in fighting against the eternal laws of our being. It is not only the thieves and gamblers, the drunkards and debauchees, who burn up their fuel to consume themselves. We are all guilty according to the measure of our indulgence in sin; for sin is always vice, and vice is always waste. The prodigal in the far country is ever "wasting his substance in riotous living." Oh, this lamentable waste! Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life!

And we waste our energy, also, in misdirection; that is, in the pursuit of things that perish with the using, and which are not worth having when we possess them. What are all the people doing who throng our busy streets? Some are pursuing pleasure, blowing bubbles, iridescent, beautiful, gone! Some are engaged in the mad chase for wealth,—a heavy burden if they gain it; and death unloads them. Still others are seeking the world's honors and emoluments, which must soon be laid by. On the day of the Queen's death an ex-champion of the prize ring said to an interviewer, "What do I think of Victoria? I think she wore a crown she never won, since she was born to the purple; and now she has laid it down. But look at my champion's belt; I fought for that, won it by hard knocks; and it's mine!" True, so far as this: the belt and the crown are both alike baubles in view of eternity; for the good Queen and the vicious slugger must both go out at last, one woman and one man, stripped

of all adventitious gains and possessions, to give an account of themselves before God.

It must appear now that, after deducting the bulk of our power which is latent and the major part of the remainder which is waste, *a mere modicum remains for profitable use.* A considerable portion of this is expended in the gaining of a livelihood; and this must needs be. A man must supply his physical necessities; and he is worse than an infidel if he does not provide also for his own household. We cannot escape the demands of bread-and-butter work. The divine law is, "If any will not work, neither let him eat."

But life is more than livelihood; infinitely more. Or, to use the words of Jesus, "The life is more than meat and the body is more than raiment." The "life" referred to is forever and ever. That which we call livelihood is for three score years and ten at most. What shall be said, then, of the folly of one who employs the small remnant of his strength in caring for his welfare during a handbreadth of time, while all eternity is before him? The just verdict is that which was passed by our Lord on the avaricious man,—"Thou fool!" So is he that looks to his temporal needs only and is not rich toward God.

The things that are worth doing are three. To begin with, *self-culture in the building of character;* and then, *to do good as we have opportunity unto all men;* but most of all and supremely, *to glorify God.* For here is the rational ultimatum of all human endeavor. The Brahmans say that God alone is real, all things else being *Maya*, or illusion; and man's highest hope is to attain to *Nirvana*, that is, absorption in the

ineffable One; "as the perfume of the Lotus flower is exhaled and dissipated in the air," or "as a drop of water falls and loses itself in the sea." It is true that God is our destination, and that our supreme hope is to return to him; not, however, in the loss of personal identity, as perfume dissipated in air or as a drop falling into the sea. Nay, our return to God is as the coming of servants into the presence of their Lord to render an account for power entrusted to them. Blessed is he that, having ten talents, can say: "Lord, they have gained thee ten more." Blessed is he that, having five, can say, "Lord, they have gained thee five more." But shame and sorrow eternally to him who, having one talent of power, must say, "I hid it in a napkin, and buried it in the ground." Let his talent be taken from him!

Is it not appalling to reflect, in view of our high dignity as depositories of a divine trust, and in view of the responsibility attendant upon it, that so small a superflux of our energy should, at the best, be used for the glory of Him who is worthy of all?

If we would make the most of ourselves in the utilization of the power committed to us, *we must needs get into a right attitude toward God.* It must be remembered that we are not makers of power, but mere agents, avenues and intermediaries of it. God puts energy into us that he may pass it through us. A man is like a dynamo, which is intended to transform and transmit power, but is useless unless in contact with the dynamic source. A man who does not transmit is as worthless, in the great economy, as a dynamo at rest. The vital point of contact with God is at Calvary. Here God comes down our souls

to meet. Here we enter into fellowship with him, as he has manifested himself in Christ, in the interest of personal virtue, benevolence and piety. It is only by thus entering into collaboration with Jesus that we glorify God.

The church professes to be in sympathy with the great purpose of Christ, to bring the sinful world back to God. It has entered into covenant with him to this end. Oh, what unused, what wasted power is here! In 1862 the Army of the Potomac lay in camp at Fair Oaks within six miles of the Confederate capital; and for months the soldiers busied themselves in parading and digging trenches, until from all over the country there rose an indignant cry, "On to Richmond!" Thus, through the centuries has the Church, the mobilized army of Christ, been encamped within sight of nations waiting to be made prisoners of hope. Awake, awake, O Zion; put on thy strength! There is a voice from heaven ever calling, "Advance to the conquest of the world!" When will the Church know her power and her responsibility? The day of her awakening will give the signal of universal conquest. The Lord will come whenever his church shows, by her holy endeavor, that she is willing that he should come and reign among us.

But the important lesson is personal, after all. The church is only what its individual members make it. Be thou strong, therefore, my friend, in the power of the Lord! Keep in close touch with him. Spend and be spent like him in the behalf of men. This is the life of faith; for faith is but contact with God. There is no hyperbole in the Master's word, "Verily, I say unto you, if ye have faith, ye shall say unto

this mountain, Be thou cast into the sea, and it shall be done." There is no end to the possibilities of a life in which, by faith, potency is transferred into power. This is the meaning of the Parable of the Vine: "Abide in me and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." I am, indeed, of myself a weak and unprofitable servant; but I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!

IN THE UPPER ROOM

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." John 20, 19–24.

This upper room was probably in the home of Mary, a rich widow of Jerusalem. The disciples had been accustomed to meet there with Jesus; and, now that he was dead, it was natural that they should resort to the familiar place. The doors were shut; for who could say which of the devoted circle might next be summoned to follow in the red footsteps of their Lord? The disciples were all there, except Thomas. Mary and Martha were probably present, with other of the ministering women; Joseph of Arimathæa, Nicodemus, Cleopas and John Mark, the widow's son. All were profoundly moved by a rumor that Jesus was risen from the dead. Some of the women, who that morning had gone to Joseph's garden, reported that they had found the grave empty and had seen angels who said to them that Jesus was risen. Mary the Magdalene had a still

more impressive story to tell: how, as she stood weeping at the tomb, Jesus had appeared, calling her by name and bidding her go straightway and tell the disciples that he was risen. Peter, also, reported that he had seen him; but with reference to this interview there is a significant silence, due perhaps to the fact that Peter had not previously seen Jesus face to face since his denial in the Judgment Hall. Cleopas and his friend related how, as they were going to the village of Emmaus that very evening, a wayfarer joined them who spoke with them of Jesus in such a manner that their hearts burned within them. But their eyes were holden so that they did not recognize him until, as they sat at meat with him, he took bread and blessed it; and then suddenly they knew him! And straightway he vanished out of their sight. To all this the assemblage must have listened with bated breath; doubt alternating with hope and wonder; when suddenly Jesus himself stood in the midst of their assemblage, saying, "Peace be unto you!"

I wish I had been present at that meeting in the upper room. A great blessing must have come to those who attended it. As long as they lived they would not forget the things that happened that evening.

I. *There was the privilege of fellowship;* which is of itself an unspeakable blessing. The social instinct is common to our race. We are made to flock together like sheep. We gather in congenial groups, each after his kind. This is why bachelors are seen going to their clubs, handicraftsmen to their guilds, freemasons to their lodges. "Birds of a feather

flock together." It is a true saying, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the face of his friend." An anchorite's life is abnormal. No matter how conceited a man may be, he usually likes another's company better than his own.

But this social instinct is not sufficient to account for the delights of Christian fellowship. Our Lord refers to a mystical union between himself and his Father; saying, "I and my Father are one." He intimates that there is a like union between him and his people; as in the parable of the Vine and its Branches. Still further, he speaks of his people as bound to each other in a singular oneness. Thus in his sacramental prayer he says: "I pray for them, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Here is a bond closer than consanguinity; and by its manifestation in our Christian assemblages the church finds its utmost usefulness; for scattered fagots, flaming to no purpose, where united make a mighty conflagration. He who holds himself aloof from this goodly fellowship, falls short of his spiritual possibilities. John and Peter and James apart were mere units, but heart to heart they were decimally multiplied. All who were gathered in that upper room were mutually stimulated in their Christian life.

But Thomas was not there. No doubt he had an excuse; as everybody has in similar circumstances; but the fact remains, that whatever of blessing was to be found in Christian association at that time, he missed it.

II. Those who attended this historic meeting had also *the advantage of mutual conference on matters of vital importance.* Malachi, writing of a period of spiritual declension, says, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a Book of Remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." The theme of conversation at this meeting in the upper room was Christ. The disciples bemoaned his death. "O for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still!" It was only a few days before, that in this very place he had bidden them farewell. "Do you remember," they are saying, "how tenderly and affectionately he spoke with us?" Do you remember this, and do you remember that? But their interest converged on Christ as revealed in their Scriptures; for the two disciples, who had gone with him to Emmaus, told how, as they journeyed, Jesus, beginning at Moses and the prophets, had "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." They recalled, no doubt, his reference to the protevangel, "The seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; and to the prophecy of Moses respecting One greater than himself; and to the words of Isaiah concerning Christ as a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who should be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities that by his stripes we might be healed; and to many other predictions concerning his life and suffering and death. It is safe to say that thenceforth the Bible was a new book to them; to be read as one journeys over a familiar path, when

he has discovered new flowers blooming on either side.

But Thomas was not there; and the Scriptures would still be to him as if written in an unknown tongue. God has promised to reveal truth to Israel at "the Tabernacle of Meeting;" nor can the most intense devotion to study by the light of midnight oil, compensate for the loss of those insights and revelations which he reserves for his people who come together with one accord in one place.

III. Observe, also, *the advantage of united prayer.* Much is to be said for supplication in the secret place. "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." But there is a special and particular promise to such as come together for prayer: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18, 19–20). That was a mighty supplication which John Knox offered in the solitude: "O God, give me Scotland or I die!" but who shall estimate the prevailing power of the Covenanters, gathered in their conventicles among the moors, pleading all night for Scotland? The mists at daybreak rising before the sun, were not more impressive than the thought of the volume of their united petitions ascending to God. A man is always in an attitude of power when down on his knees; but he becomes a very Titan when his petition makes part of a phalanx of prayers to take the kingdom of heaven by force (Mat. 11, 12).

The upper room was filled with an atmosphere of prayer ; but Thomas was not present to be filled with it, enveloped by it, surcharged with it. Great was his loss. He may have been praying alone, but the blessing reaped in solitude was not to be compared with that which awaited him by Christ's promise and appointment, in this gathering of the disciples.

IV. But there was a greater blessing than any of the foregoing in *the personal presence of Jesus*.. He came and stood in their midst. The disciples might have anticipated this; for had he not said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them" ? It is true that Christ is everywhere, by virtue of his omnipresence ; but he has promised to manifest himself in a peculiar manner to his people when they are come together to honor him.

If I were authorized to announce to-day, that Jesus would visit New York, next Wednesday evening, and be pleased to meet his people, it is safe to say that no enclosure would be large enough to hold the multitude that would assemble to welcome him. No doubt some would deliberately absent themselves; for not all are desirous of seeing Christ. Up to the time when Adam sinned, he found his greatest pleasure in walking with God in the cool of the day ; but afterwards, on hearing the voice of God in the garden, he "was ashamed and hid himself." It is safe to say, however, that all who really love and follow Jesus would honor the appointment. Some who have been burdened with age and bed-ridden would insist upon being carried on stretchers that their dim eyes might gaze upon him. Mothers, who have long

been telling their children of the beauty of the face of Jesus, would take them to behold him. What a host would assemble, and with what unspeakable delight! In fact, however, we have precisely such an appointment as that; the Lord has promised, in terms clear and unmistakable, to be present with his people who shall at that time, in various churches, assemble to commune with each other and with him.

To those who gathered in the upper room he appeared, despite the fact that the doors were closed. What are bolts and bars to Christ when he would keep an appointment with his brethren? But Thomas was not with the disciples who saw Christ that day. The great blessing went by default, because he had not put himself in the way to receive it.

V. There was the benefit, also, of *his salutation*, "*Peace be unto you.*" The disciples were in great trouble; and this must have been a healing balm to their souls. They had parted with Jesus, three days before, at the gate of Gethsemane, where "they all forsook him and fled." Since then, how much had happened! The scourge, the buffeting in the judgment hall, the crown of thorns, the bearing of the cross, the bitter death! They had lain awake and seen the agonized face of Jesus during the watches of the night. Theirs was a bereavement which had seemed beyond all comfort. But now, behold, he calms their troubled souls with a word, as when he bade the tempest, Be still!

But, alas! Thomas was not there, and his sorrow remained. How many needless griefs we carry because we will not come where Christ may lay his benediction of peace upon us.

VI. And then consider how *the faith of the disciples was fortified that day.* The record says, "He showed them his hands and his side; then were the disciples glad." Well might they be glad; for in him thus triumphant, "life and immortality are brought to light." He that was dead liveth and is alive forevermore! The seal of authenticity is put upon his gospel; as it is written, "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." We often wish that our dead, whom we followed with tears to the border-land, could return and tell us of what lies beyond. One and one only who has thus passed through the portals of eternity can and does return to enlighten us. The upper room was that day like a Court of Justice where Christ and his gospel were vindicated. The disciples had been given over to doubt; wondering, questioning, hoping against hope. But doubt vanished now and each might say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

And Thomas was not there! He had the opportunity of assuring himself but did not embrace it; and he has come down as "Doubting Thomas" through the ages. We hear much of "honest doubt;" but let no man assert that his doubt is honest unless he has taken all possible measures to dispel it. The crucial test of honest doubt is an agony to get rid of it.

VII. And finally, the disciples, in that upper room, *received again the great Commission and with it an enduement of power.* The Lord had previously given them this commission, in this very room; but after his death they seemed to forget it. One said, "I go

a-fishing;" and another, "I also go with thee." They had hoped that Jesus would restore again the glory of Israel, but his light had passed under an eclipse and they might as well quit. Why not go a-fishing if Jesus were dead? The hope of universal conquest had turned out to be an empty dream. But he returns now and repeats "As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you." And having said this, he breathed on them saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" Here is replenishment of power, indeed. "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth; go ye, therefore, and preach the evangel; and, lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." They can never lose courage again, since they have seen the Captain of their Salvation and been armed and panoplied for service in bringing the world to him.

But Thomas was not there. In vain did his comrades dwell on the things that had happened in the upper room. His soul was torn by conflicting emotions of doubt and sorrow. He would take nothing on hearsay; "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe!" There are many Christians who, thus failing to use their opportunity of communion with Christ, go bearing their burdens alone; doubting because they have not taken occasion to relieve their doubts, and weeping at Golgotha because they have not gone forth to meet the risen Christ.

We may rest assured that Thomas said, "I will never lose another opportunity." A week later the disciples were assembled again in that upper room; "and Thomas was with them." And again Jesus

stood in their midst, saying, "Peace be unto you!" And he saith to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing." And Thomas, his doubts all gone, his soul transported with the joy of renewed faith, saith unto him, "My Lord and my God!"

The lesson is plain. He that would be blest must put himself in the way of blessing; as did blind Bartimeus, when he heard the footsteps of the multitude and learned that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. We have ourselves to blame for barrenness of soul. A student in Princeton Seminary came to Dr. Charles Hodge saying, "I am greatly troubled with doubts as to the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel. Will you go over with me the arguments for the Being of God, and Immortality, and the Atonement and the Personality of the Spirit?" His instructor answered, "It is not argument that you want, my young friend, but to come closer to Christ. Get into the fellowship of service; thrust your sickle into the harvest; learn the joy of growing weary in duty; and your doubts will vanish." It was wise counsel. The way of duty is the way of blessing. Now it comes to us in the closet and again at the Tabernacle of Meeting. Neglect not the hour of secret prayer; neither forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is (Heb. 10, 25). Life is too short for people made in God's likeness and journeying to eternity to lose any opportunity of receiving a blessing. My friend, keep close to Christ; and wherever Christ may be, be there to meet him.

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

"Behold the fowls of the air."—Matt. 6, 26.

"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."—Jer. 8, 7.

"I am sure," said a friend to me last Monday, "that I heard the chirp of a robin this morning." It is nothing new to be welcoming the harbingers of spring. "When the swallows homeward fly" was sung by Anacreon five hundred years before Christ. Homer celebrated the return of the water-fowl to the rivers of Asia. Solomon mingled his welcome to the birds with his wooing of the Shulamite; "My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

It is a singular fact that the arrival of the birds is always on schedule time. We say, 'One swallow does not make a summer." But it does; that is to say, it makes assurance doubly sure. Not more certainly do "summer people," who leave the city in June for the seaside or the mountain, return in due

time to open their boarded-up homes with keys that grate rustily in the lock, than do the feathered pilgrims come back in their appointed season to attend to annual repairs and housecleaning. So punctual are they that some of our Indian tribes name their recurring moons after the migratory birds. In the regularity of their flitting they seem to prophesy, as from a divine oracle, that summer and winter and seedtime and harvest shall never fail.

It is singular, also, that they never lose their way. Professor Newton, of Cambridge, says, "In the migration of birds we are brought face to face with the greatest mystery of the animal kingdom"; his wonder being that they advance so unerringly in a continuous flight of thousands of miles over oceans and trackless wastes. You have heard them, as you lay awake in the watches of the night, passing overhead with a rustle as of a million wings; mingled cries of crane and cormorant, of swan and mallard, plover and sandpiper, lark and cuckoo; you listened until naught was heard but a few lingering cries, then the stroke of a solitary wing, then silence. They had gone on their long pilgrimage through the night.

How are they guided? Not by viston; for, notwithstanding the marvelous power of a bird's eye, it cannot pierce the darkness nor cover the course of so long a pilgrimage. The suggestion that they direct their course by some occult knowledge of the location of the magnetic pole is mere hypothesis. The view of Herr Palmen that they are guided by older birds, who have had experience along the way, is insufficient. It is true that wild geese fly in con-

verging lines, with one old backwoodsman in front, as if to blaze a pathway through the aerial forests for those coming after him; but many others, like the skylarks, pursue their journey alone. To say that they are guided by instinct, is an evasion; since instinct itself remains to be accounted for. I think no better explanation can be offered than that which Bryant gives in his Ode to a Water Fowl;

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the distant sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seekst thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along the pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not weary to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend
Soon o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone! The abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart;

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will guide my steps aright.

It is not my purpose, however, to present a disquisition in ornithology, a science which has no present concern for us except as it overlaps the larger province of theology. We have to do with the homing habit of the birds only so far as it touches the problem of human life and destiny. Our Master said, "Behold, the fowls of the air." He found "tongues in trees, sermons in stones, books in the running brooks and good in everything"; and so should we. The lesson, which we here desire to emphasize, was sung by Thomas Moore in the familiar lines:

The bird let loose in Eastern skies
When hastening fondly home,
Ne'er stoops to earth her wing, nor flies
Where idle warblers roam.

But high she shoots through air and light
Above all low delay,
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight
Nor shadow dims her way.

So grant me, God, from every care
And stain of passion free
Aloft through virtue's purer air
To hold my course to Thee.

No sin to cloud, no lure to stay
My soul as home she springs,
Thy sunshine on her joyful way
Thy freedom in her wings.

In pursuance of this thought let me present five considerations, suggested by the home-coming of the birds with "God's sunshine in their joyful way, his freedom in their wings."

1. *We came forth from God.* Can this be proven? Aye; from the Scripture, which says, "So God created man in his own image, in his own image created he him; and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." But quite aside from Scripture there is conclusive evidence of his divine birth in his own inner consciousness. It is demonstrated by the fact that he can say "God"; that he can think God, and reason about the problems that have their center and solution in him; that he can love God and obey him; that he can defy God and reject his overtures of mercy; for in this he is differentiated from all other orders of life. No better definition of man can be found than that given by Sir William Hamilton: "Man is not an organism; he is an intelligence served by organs"; that is, he is not a body possessed of a soul, but a soul making use of a body. This can be affirmed of no other living thing. The same thought is elaborated in the words of Theodore Parker: "The greatest star is that at the little end of the telescope, the star that is looking, not looked after nor lookedat."

2. *We are a long way from home.* Sin has alienated us from God. It has sent us out into the far country as moral vagabonds. There is a pathetic response in every man to the legend of the Wandering Jew. But comfort lies in our assurance that however a man may dim and distort the divineness within him he never altogether loses it. I look into the water on a windy day and know that my image is there, though, by reason of its rippled surface, I cannot distinguish it: so is the divine image in man blurred and obscured by the passions engendered by sin. We

are far, far from God, but we still bear the tokens of our origin in him. Nor can I escape from his influence; though I take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall his hand lead me and his right hand shall hold me.

3. *The homing instinct is still ours.* David's pilgrim, on his way back from Babylon sings, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" There is no rest except in God. "We came forth from him," said Augustine, "and we are homesick until we return to him."

There is a legend telling how Jesus, on his visit to Jerusalem, at twelve years of age, found seven Rabbis, known as "The Pillars of Wisdom" sitting in the hall Gazith discussing the question, "Where shall rest be found?" One of them said, "We find our rest in an abundance of this world's goods"; another, "We find it in the good opinion of our fellows"; another, "It is reserved for those who know"; another, "Its secret is in contentment with present conditions"; another, "Rest is in the enjoyment of simple pleasures"; another, "It is in doing good as we have opportunity"; and still another, "Rest is in self-respect founded on conscious virtue." Whereupon the fair-haired boy said, "None ever resteth, until he findeth God. This is the true solution of the problem; and by this thought we are stimulated to heavenward flight.

"Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace;
Rise from transitory things
Toward Heaven thy dwelling place!
Sun and moon and stars decay,
Time shall soon this world remove;
Rise, my soul, and haste away
To seats prepared above."

4. *The way homeward is clearly marked out.* The same God who provides the migrating birds with an aerial chart, has prepared the way before us; as the Master said, "If he so care for the fowls of the air, shall he not much more care for you, O ye of little faith?" It was prophesied of old, "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." Still clearer light was thrown upon the problem of our destiny, when Jesus said to his disciples in the upper room, "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know; and the way ye know." Thomas saith unto him, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." So then the soul returns to God, if ever, by the way of Calvary, the royal way of the cross. For, aside from Christ and him crucified, "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." He that believeth in him, and he only, hath everlasting life.

5. *But there are opposing influences;* all of them comprehended in one, to wit, *a free, refractory will.* In the whole realm of nature there is nothing but man which is not obedient to the laws of its own being. The lower orders of life have instinct; instinct is bondage; but intelligence is freedom, since it is a spark thrown off from the life of the sovereign God. Instinct yields an automatic assent to law, but reason may violate law. The headwinds offer but a momen-

tary hindrance to the flight of the returning flocks, which rise above them into the calmer air; but the exercise of our sovereign will may place athwart our homeward path a moral impossibility. We think sometimes that our liberty is restrained by law; in fact, the law of our being is disannulled by the exercise of our liberty. In other words, we know our duty and we do it not.

The bobolink in its sojourn among the forests of the Amazon feels the breath of the benignant winds and says, "March has come; the sun is shining; the snow is melting in my nest, four thousand miles away; my fellows will all be there; I must be going." No sooner said than done; behold, the birds are on the wing!

But how comes the Voice to the prodigal in the far country? In the watches of the night he hears the sounds of music and dancing afar off; shivering, he draws his rags about him, saying, "Fool that I am, to linger here!" and still he lingers. The pangs of hunger, suggesting the abundance in his father's house, urge him to return; and still he dwells among the husks. He feels his loneliness, and knows his kinsfolk are awaiting him under the old roof-tree; but his stubborn will resists the summons. To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow! How slowly impulse rises to resolve! How long it takes a sovereign man to hear his Father's call and say, "I will arise and go!"

In the far north, recently, I came upon a lonely mallard in an ice-locked lake; one that had been left behind while its companions were preening their feathers in pleasant summer streams. Startled by my

footsteps, it strove to rise, and fluttered back; its wing was broken. It may be that these words of mine shall come to one belated thus in the far country; some soul who, again and again in the passing years, has seen his friends set forth upon the heavenly way, while he was left behind. It may be, friend, that the time of your flitting has come. Blessed be God, there is no soul so crippled by sin that, when he calls, it may not rise to answer him.

To you, belated one, weary of wandering, comes a divine voice, "Return to thy rest!" Is there not an answering voice within, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul"? The homing instinct of the dove, which Noah sent forth to see if the waters were assuaged, brought her back again when she found no rest; "and he put forth his hand out of the ark and drew her in unto him." So the piercéd hand of Jesus is ready to be stretched out to draw you into the ark of safety and of peace.

"O cease, my wandering soul,
On restless wing to roam;
All the wide world, to either pole,
Has not for thee a home.

"Behold the ark of God,
Behold the open door;
Hasten to gain that dear abode,
And rove, my soul, no more!

"There safe thou shalt abide,
There sweet shall be thy rest,
And every longing satisfied,
With full salvation blest."

A WORKING THEORY

"O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Romans 9, 20.

On my way from Ministers' Meeting to my study, not long ago, I was buttonholed by a clerical brother who delivered himself on this wise: "I should like to consult you about a matter which is engaging the thought of a little company of conservative liberals, just now. It is plain to see that the traditional view of the Scriptures is untenable; but we fear the pendulum is swinging too far the other way. We want to find, somewhere along the *via media* a Working Theory of inspiration on which all reasonable people can unite: For it is high time that we turn aside from controversy and resume the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ."

I declined, with thanks, the kind invitation to join this coterie; but I did not blame my friend for connecting himself with it. If I were in a fleet, sailing in mid-ocean, on a starless night, with every chart discredited and every compass and chronometer thrown into the sea, I should he thankful for any sort of dead reckoning. But the Church of Jesus Christ, of which I desire to be a loyal member, affixes its faith to divine authority and is, therefore, not casting about for "working theories." The suggestion of my friend however,

was interesting as an indication of the tendency of our time. It is a rationalistic age, a wilful age, an irreverent age. Man is glorified; God is minimized. We reason for ourselves as if we were superior in these premises. But there is one who, sooner or later, will make himself heard: "Be still, and know that I am God!"

No doubt reason is a royal gift, but there is something to be said for authority. In our text Paul is justifying his doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty. Let the most repellent construction be placed upon that truth, it is still a hard, logical, manifest fact that the potter may do what he will with the clay. And, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

The suggestion of "a Working Theory" along the lines of theological thought is not new. The children of Israel on their departure from Egypt were guided by a pillar of cloud, the visible symbol of the divine Presence, from which seemed ever to proceed a voice, "I am the Lord your God!" A few days later they were encamped at Sinai; and Moses went up into the mountain to receive the Law. As time passed and he did not reappear, the people gathered themselves unto Aaron and said, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses we wot not what has become of him." The golden calf was set up, accordingly, and the people made merry about it. They had found "a Working Theory," a god whom they could touch with their hands and see with their eyes. This is one of the ever recurring episodes of history. The people who throng our streets are not atheists. Each for

himself has a god of some sort; if not Jehovah, then wealth, or pleasure or sordid ambition. If one refuses to accept God as he has revealed himself in his word, the only alternative is to make for himself a god as it pleaseth him. This is the clew to the giddy maze of worldly life: "the people sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play." And, all the while, from the great Oracle comes the voice, "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; thou shalt have no other gods before me!"

We observe, also, in many quarters a desire to formulate "a Working Theory" of the Universe. It is assumed that such a theory is not afforded in the statement of Scripture, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We must somehow eliminate the supernatural from the visible order of things. Let us proceed, therefore, to an hypothesis: Here is a primordial germ; no difficulty appears in the fact that the origin of this germ is unaccounted for. It develops into a nebula, by the operation of an inward energy, the origin of which is also unaccounted for. The nebula throws off concentric rings of star-dust, which proceed in some unaccountable manner to formulate themselves into worlds. In process of time the individual orb is somehow carpeted with greensward and peopled by various orders of life. Here is a theory, confessing itself to be pure hypothesis, in which law, matter, energy, life, reason and soul are all unaccounted for, which presumes to challenge, on grounds of reasonableness and utility the majestic proposition that in the remote past God sat upon the circle of the universe

and by his creative fiat called into being things that were not: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth!"

It is not strange, in view of this tendency to cut loose from authority, that men propose a Working Theory of Inspiration. The Scriptures themselves lay down their own credentials in terms clear and unmistakable. The word "inspiration" is its own definition; meaning "God-breathed." Thus it is written, "The prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But here is the "Working Theory": A company of fallible men known as "redactors," living at long intervals during a period of some thousands of years, determined, without any divine supervision or control worth mentioning, to get together a lot of old legends and traditions bearing more or less closely on ethics, theology and ecclesiastical history, and to edit them by selection and emendation into a sacred volume; and this volume, in its most recent and approved form is seen in the grotesque "Polychrome Bible." The book thus produced, is set forth as a mingled tissue of truth and falsehood; so that the individual reader must needs go to a syndicate of Biblical "experts" to find out what particular portions of it, if any, are trustworthy. And this is heralded as a Working Theory of inspiration; that is to say, a path of direction for immortal souls on their way to judgment desiring "an infallible rule of faith and practice"!

It is respectfully submitted that the traditional view of the Scriptures is of far more practical value to thoughtful men. It has worked fairly well thus

far; as witness some hundreds of millions of right-living people who adhere to it. Here is a significant fact: The friends of the Bible have more than doubled in numbers in the Nineteenth Century. Wherefore, we conclude that we need no better theory of inspiration than we have now. It is dangerous business for Uzzah to stretch forth his hand to steady the Ark. God has spoken; let that suffice. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

It might be supposed that the inventive genius of our time would have spared the sacred doctrine of the Incarnation; but not so. The old statement is, that the only-begotten Son of God, in the fulness of time, came into the world and assumed our nature, so that, being "very man of very man," he was still "very God of very God." But here is a mystery that must be gotten rid of, since it is assumed that no truth is practical so long as it cannot be understood. First came the Docetists, asserting that Christ was not man at all, but only God; that his human body was purely spectral; that he was God living in disguise among men. Then the Arians rejected the "traditional" view of the Incarnation, asserting that Christ, while not really God-man was an unique personage, superior to man and inferior to God. A millenium later, the Socinians, on the contrary, asserted that Jesus was in nowise superhuman; an ideal man, indeed; holy, harmless and undefiled, but still mere man. This position was soon seen to

be untenable, since obviously no mere man could be honest while claiming equality with God.

Such have been the vain efforts to improve on revealed truth; and the endeavor to find a Working Theory of the Incarnation still goes on. In one of our Theological Seminaries a demand has recently been made for "a restatement of the Doctrine of Christ." But would it not be better to get back to the historic statement which runs through the Scriptures from beginning to end? It was prophesied, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us." And Christ coming, in the fulness of time, asserted that he was that promised One. What could be plainer than this: "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" Or what could be clearer than the words addressed to the woman of Samaria who was perplexed concerning the Christ, "I that speak unto thee am He"?

But of all doctrines, that of the Atonement is most troublesome to those who desire to expunge the supernatural from accepted forms of belief. Here the ground of offence is the blood of Jesus Christ. The plan of salvation as marked out by divine authority is meaningless and wholly ineffective without the blood: as it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;" and again, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remis-

sion of sin." The first prophecy of the coming of Messiah, uttered at the gateway of Paradise when Adam passed out, had in it an intimation of blood. There was blood flowing over all the altars of the Old Economy, and sprinkled on all its rites and ceremonies.

How the unbelieving world has travailed to bring forth a doctrine of redemption which should have no blood in it. There is the "Moral Theory"; to wit, that Christ came into the world to save souls by the power of a holy life, showing in his walk and conversation what character is and what manhood ought to be. And there is the "Govermental Theory" which admits the power of the cross, yet only as an expression of the justice of the divine administration in showing God's hatred of sin and love of holiness. Other theories have been advanced to show that the death of Jesus was a mere incident in his life and had practically nothing to do with any atonement for sin.

But the statement of Scripture allows no room for doubt or question; the only-begotten son of God came into the world to die, and to save the world by dying for it. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. It pleased God to lay upon him the iniquities of us all. In other words, he took our place before the offended Law, bearing in his own person the penalty of our sins, so that we might be saved by faith in him. But, so long as the world stands, this authoritative statement of the Atonement will not commend itself to the natural heart of man. It is true to-day, as in Paul's time: "The Jews require

a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness, but to them that believe, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God."

It would appear that the Doctrine of Regeneration is so clearly stated by Christ himself that none of his professed friends and followers would, for a moment, think of evading it. His words are, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; and again, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But here again, there are those who insist upon the exercise of reason as against authority; though the doctrine in question is avowedly beyond all human ken. It is asserted that the transformation which marks the beginning of the Spiritual life is in no respect mysterious, but wholly normal and natural, depending on the exercise of the individual will. If a man, who has been wasting his substance in riotous living, determines to "turn over a new leaf," that will accomplish the purpose very well. In other words, regeneration is simply reformation, and reformation is within the reach of any resolute man. And of late another "Working Theory" of Regeneration has appeared in a book called, "The Psychology of Religion." This theory, claiming to be purely scientific, suggests that regeneration is one of the periodic changes of human life; and it supports this proposition by statistics, showing that conversion occurs, in a vast majority of cases, at the time when youth passes over into maturity. It is a process,

therefore, which "science" does not hesitate to account for on purely physiological grounds. We stand reverently in the presence of that science which ever deals with facts; but for the so-called science which, with an hypothesis in one hand and a dogma in the other, rushes in where angels fear to tread, we have nothing but contempt; and particularly when it arrays itself against the authority of the living God. The Lord himself said, that regeneration involves an inscrutable mystery: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And who art thou, O man, that repliest against him?

To complete the chain of newly-stated and improved truths, it is proposed now to elaborate a Working Theory of the Kingdom. This is the keystone of the gospel arch. Our Lord came into the world to set up a kingdom of truth and righteousness. It has its beginning in the individual soul; as he said, "The kingdom of God is within you;" and it presents itself externally in the association of all regenerated souls, the Church being the visible form of this kingdom on earth. The business of the Church is to gather men by conversion into this kingdom; and this work must go on, until the Kingdom of Christ shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

It is insisted, however, that in this view of the kingdom an undue emphasis is placed upon the soul and eternity. The thing for practical men to do is to make this present world a better place to live in.

Hence Society takes the place of the Kingdom, in the "Working Theory." Our business is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, provide better conditions for the lapsed masses, and, in general terms, to accent the importance of temporal comfort rather than of eternal life. This is precisely the position taken by Confucius in his Analects when he says, "You ask me if there is a God? I answer, I know not, but I know there are men suffering on every hand, and it behooves us to relieve them. You ask me if there is a heaven? I answer, I know not; but I know this China of ours, and it devolves upon us to make China the best possible place to live in." Aye, let us give up our otherworldliness and attend to conditions here and now.

At this point, let it be understood that Christ, in his religion, is not oblivious of the present needs of men. It is written of him, "He went about doing good"; healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowful. Yet he was ever insistent that life here is but an handbreadth, while eternity is forever and ever; and that, while the body shall presently return to the earth as it was, the soul must live on through the interminable æons. A theory which proceeds on any other basis is not a Working Theory for serious men.

It is too late in the world's history to revive the old Edomite heresy of trading off a birthright for a mess of pottage. The world may assert that food and raiment and comfortable shelter are supremely important; but, as Christians, we persist in our Master's contention that "the life is more than food and the body is more than raiment." Feed the

hungry? Aye. Heal the sick? Aye. But the cross is the ultimatum of the Gospel; and all things else fade into insignificance when compared with the importance of salvation from sin. The work of the kingdom is to convert souls; that is, to bring them into harmony with the purposes of God in Jesus Christ, and so fit them for the never-ending life. And the question of the Master rings clear, through the ranks of all who clamor for something better than his plan for the restitution of all things, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

It is evident, from the foregoing, that the path of wisdom and safety, for such as profess to be followers of Christ, leads back to the authority of the Scriptures as expressing the mind of God. He anticipated all the heresies of the centuries in giving to his people a working basis for every department of the spiritual life, and in giving it once for all. In the legend of Dædalus he is represented as saying to his son, as they fasten their wings with wax, "Fly well, O Icarus, but steer clear of the sun!" It is incumbent on us always to use our reason in spiritual things, not however by way of invention but in interpretation. It has pleased God to give us wings; let us fly well, but not too near the sun. And, however wise we may deem ourselves, let us remember that there is One whose wisdom is infinitely above ours. Therefore, who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

In the Book of Ecclesiastes we have the experience of Solomon, who, endowed with wisdom above his fellow men, sought to improve upon the injunc-

tion which was given him at the beginning of his career, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." He would devise for himself a "Working Theory" of life. Accordingly, he communed with himself, saying, "Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all that have been before me; I will apply my heart to know and to search and to seek out the reason of things." And observe the result, "Vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit! Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." Then he changed his purpose and, abandoning the quest of knowledge as the supreme good, he determined to pursue pleasure. "I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore, enjoy pleasure; and, behold, this also is vanity! I said of laughter, It is mad, and of mirth, What doeth it?" So one plan after another failed, and he found no "Working Theory" until he returned to the counsel of the Lord. And in the closing words of his monologue we make the practical application of this discourse: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

THE ROLL CALL OF THE MIGHTIES

"By Faith."—Heb. xi, 4.

The Eleventh of Hebrews is a roll-call of the heroes of faith. How solemnly they march along the heights, far yonder, like shadows in the solemn silence of the past! No trumpets blare; no banners wave. They died so long ago that not a handful of their dust, no hieroglyph on a tombstone, nor crumbling scrap of byssus remains to commemorate them. Yet they live: they are the immortals. They are the potent factors in current history; while the living are but shadows. Lords and great captains, secretaries and plenipotentiaries, these are marionettes pulled with a string. If you would find the real principalities and powers, call the roster of the dead. A man must die to live. Those who yonder tread so silently the distant heights are to-day laying the foundations of temples and capitols, formulating creeds and framing the symbols of government. It was a great truth that Longfellow set forth in his tribute to the memory of Charles Sumner:

"So when a great man dies,
For years beyond our ken
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the paths of men."

But who are these in the Procession of the Mighties? And why are they here? Let us attend to the roll-call. *Abel.* What did he do? He raised an altar by the gateway of Eden and offered a firstling of the flock upon it. The lamb was a symbol of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and the flowing blood was a prophecy of the great tragedy which was to be wrought on Golgotha for the salvation of men. It was a wondrous vision that he saw "by faith" that day.—*Enoch.* What did Enoch do? He "walked with God"; and as he walked he reasoned with God, as one friend with another. He walked with his Maker along the rough paths and up the mountain slopes. Men who watched him on his upward journey said he walked alone; and when he disappeared they called him dead: but he had entered heaven at his Companion's word: "The day is far spent, come in and abide with me." And he was not; for God took him.—*Noah.* What was his mighty deed? He built an ark "to the saving of his house." He built it in fair weather, far from the nearest port of the sea. And men passed by, and tapped their foreheads and mocked at him. He heeded them not; he had been "warned of things not seen as yet." His faith was proof against derision, and by it "he condemned the world."—*Abraham;* "the Father of the Faithful." He went out of Ur of the Chaldees at the behest of the Voice. He left his country and his father's house, following upward the course of the Great River, listening ever for the Voice, and journeying "by faith" to a country which he knew not.—*Jacob.* Why is he among the immortals? Because, when he was

a-dying, he "blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshiped leaning on his staff"; old, blind, decrepit, he held his hands crosswise, despite all remonstrance; and by this crosswise blessing changed the current of history. He saw aforetime things that were hidden from clearer eyes.—*The Parents of Moses.* What is their title to immortality? They brought their infant to the riverside, and, laying him in a basket there, committed him "by faith" to the elements and their God. Have not other parents looked into the faces of their children and dreamed dreams and seen visions? Aye; but never such as these. By the clairvoyance of faith they read destiny in the face of this "proper child."—Then come *a Horde of Fugitive Slaves*, accorded a place among the Mighties, because, with the footfall of their foes behind them and the deep waters before them, they heard the command, "Go forward!" and "by faith" obeyed it.—"And the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson and Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets; who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

And does the procession end here? Oh, no. At the cross, the divisional point and center of history, the cavalcade re-forms and completes the cycle, coming down to this day. Let the roll-call go on. —*The Apostles.* One by one they hear the Voice saying, "Rise up and follow me;" and they follow, in footprints red with blood, to service, death and

victory, "enduring, by faith, as seeing him who is invisible."—*The Confessors.* Hiding in tents and caves and catacombs, in conventicles among the moors, in fastnesses of the hills; issuing forth at the call of the roaring lion and the flashing ax. The sand of the arena drinks their blood. In presence of the mocking multitudes they sing Te Deums.—*The Crusaders.* They flock to the cry, "Deus vult!" they follow the red-cross banner through the wilderness, in pathways lined on either side with graves, fainting, rallying, singing as they die, "Fairest Lord Jesus, O Thou of God and man the Son!"—*The Reformers;* putting their lives in jeopardy for the truth's sake, facing kings and councils without a tremor, vindicating their faith in torture chambers, going up to God in chariots of fire.—*The Missionaries.* "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publish peace, that say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." They cross the seas, penetrate the jungles, climb the mountains, with their lives in their hands. They are laid away in unmarked and unremembered graves.—Is that all? Nay; "the time would fail me to tell" of Augustine and Paschal, of Howard and Livingstone, of Florence Nightingale and Grace Darling and Elizabeth Frye, of Whitfield and Spurgeon and Moody, of the nameless multitude who "by faith" have wrought miracles, as did the mighties of long centuries ago. They are of the Legion of Honor; they wear the Iron Cross; their names are recorded on the palms of God's hands; not one of them is forgotten before him.

A noble army, men and boys, the matron and the maid.
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice, in robes of white arrayed;
They climbed the steep ascent to heaven mid peril, toil and pain;
O God, to us may grace be given to follow in their train!

What is the secret of this moral heroism? More than twenty time in the Eleventh of Hebrews it is said that these immortals won their title "by faith." But what does this mean, "by faith"? Here is the definition of faith, with which the record is prefaced, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Let us translate that into the vernacular of practical life. Faith is living among realities. It is putting things at their right relative value. It is placing the emphasis on facts as against fancies, on realities as against phantasms. It is making room for God and giving him his proper place in the economy of life. A man of faith is larger than his shop or his office; he is larger than his environment; he refuses to live within a world circumscribed by the physical senses. He sees things that lie beyond the range of fleshly eyes. He touches things that cannot be reached by the finger tips. To him things visible are but a passing show; "the things which are seen are temporal, but the unseen things are eternal." Gold, pleasure, laurel wreaths are shadows; he counts them as naught; realities are all.

Here is the secret of the triumphant life. The immortals endure as seeing him who is invisible. They shake off the dust of a world that dies, and journey on to a better country, even an heavenly. They believe! Take faith out of the lives of those

ancient worthies and what have you? They are no better than Nimrod and Belshazzar and Darius and Meneptah; a procession of names and grotesque figures on marble slabs and monuments. They lived, they died! The roll-call of their names is hollow as the beating of a drum. It is

> "The meteor of a night of distant years
> That flashed unnoticed, save by wrinkled eld
> Musing at midnight upon prophecies,
> Who at her lonely lattice saw the gleam
> Point to the mist-poised shroud—
> Then quietly closed her pale lips
> And locked the secret up."

Wherein does Moses differ from Xerxes? Both alike lashed the sea; but Moses lashed it in the name of God. Wherein does Rahab differ from Aspasia? Both were harlots. Aspasia reasoned with philosophers; but Rahab trusted in the divine covenant and let down from her window the scarlet thread. Wherein was Samson better than Hercules? Did not both rend the jaws of lions? Aye; but the long, braided locks of Samson were the token of his faith; shear those locks, and he is weak as other men.

This is the differentiating line which runs through all human life, to separate the dying from the immortal. If men, who are raised to places of authority, rule for God, they rule for ever; if not, they are laid away in the cemeteries of the pigmies. If men of wealth make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness by using it as a solemn trust for the welfare of their fellow men, then are they by faith rich toward God; if not, they die like one of whom a recent editorial in one of our news-

papers said, "The frogs' legs that were served upon his table have as just a title to immortality as he."

How shall we explain this power of faith? Wherefore should a man be chosen here and there from the common herd and immortalized? The reason is clear. To begin with, *faith brings a man into touch with God.* There is no other way of approach to God; as it is written, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." To bring one's soul into line with the divine will is to find one's self, and to assume an attitude of power. I am a cipher: but when I move up against the great Unit, I am ten, a hundred, a thousand, if you will; and herein I fulfil the prediction, "One shall put ten thousand to flight." I recently saw a tug in the Bay drawing six barges of iron; the rope by which it was fastened to them was powerless in itself, yet they could not move without it. So faith couples the soul with God; and, binding us to Omnipotence, it make us laborers together with God.

Then follows self-respect. A man perceives God now, not as an abstraction but as Emmanuel, "God with us." He looks into the face of Jesus, reads there the story of pardoning grace, and accepts it. The sin that shamed him is blotted out. He reads the blood-atonement as Abel, standing beside his primeval altar, read it. He enters into "the reproach of Christ" as Moses entered into it. He sees the day of Messiah as Abraham "saw it and was glad." An infinite vista of possibilities is opened before him. He moves up to the side of the "first-born among many brethren," who said, "As the

Father sent me so send I you." Life has new meanings for him. He lives no longer as one of the Ephemera. Knowing that he dies not "as the beast dieth," he measures his life by corresponding responsibility.

Thus he necessarily puts *a new emphasis on truth.* For truth is the basis of conduct; since "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." He longs to solve the mighty problems that reach out into the eternal æons. "There are so many voices and none of them is without signification" for him. He turns to his Bible, and searches it as for hid treasure. He sits at the feet of Jesus and learns of him. He hears him teaching, "not as the Scribes but as one having authority"; and he takes him at his word. Doubt is dispelled,—the doubt "that makes us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt." With vanishing doubt, fear takes its flight. Faith feeds on faith. Thus he advances "from strength to strength" in the symmetrical building of character. He moves away from such timorous phases as "I guess" or "I wonder" to "I know" and "I believe."

And in this sacred quest of truth, *duty becomes supreme.*

> "So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, Thou must
> The youth replies, I can."

He hears his Master saying "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do." As he looks toward eternity, the fear of death vanishes; for death is but "the covered bridge, leading from light to light,

through a brief darkness." And, more and more, the seriousness of life grows upon this man; since life is the season given for preparation for eternity. To live for eternity is, to him, another way of saying, "Live to-day!"

So faith, in brief, *lifts a man above his sordid environment.* He is no longer the creature of circumstance. He is "in the world but not of it." He can endure sorrow, because it worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He prepares himself for trial by drinking water out of the King's well. He confronts difficulties as did the priests, who walked around Jericho blowing rams' horns: and difficulties, like the walls of Jericho, fall down flat before him. His conflict with temptation is like the historic battle which was fought on Lookout Mountain, with the clear blue of heaven above and the storm clouds far beneath. The world is so little now! Heaven so fair, eternity so vast! Duty is so important, character so inestimable! God has been taken into the reckoning; and God, and the verities which center in him, are all in all.

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith. Here is the secret of courage, of optimism and of final triumph. If God be for us, who can be against us?

The line is clearly drawn. The two processions that have moved down through the centuries are moving on. Here are those who, "forever hastening to the grave, stoop downward as they run"; with their downcast eyes they search for yellow dust and crumbling wreaths that lie along the earth. Let them surge past! You, my brother in the faith of

Jesus are the child of a King. You belong with those "of whom the world is not worthy," who "by faith obtain a good report" here and in heaven. Their eyes are uplifted; they endure as seeing the invisible. They are pilgrims and sojourners, looking for a better country, even an heavenly, and for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

LEFT OUT OF THE PARABLE

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and he delivered unto them his goods." Matt. 25, 14.

Of all the Parables this comes closest to the conscience of the average man. It was delivered by our Lord to his disciples on Tuesday of Passion Week. The shadow of the cross was over him; yet he spoke to them not of the Atonement nor of his approaching glorification, but of the Final Judgment, when all must appear to render an account of their stewardship before God.

The scene is a Rural Reckoning. The householder, returning after some years of absence in a distant country, summons his servants to account for the property which he had entrusted to their care. He that had received five talents reported a gain of five more, for which he was duly commended, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He that had received two talents reported a corresponding gain and received like commendation. He that had received one talent, having gained nothing, restored the original trust saying, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine." His lord replied, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers; then at my coming I

should have received mine own with usury," adding, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents." The Parable concludes with the statement of a general principle; "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

As to the justice of this principle there may be a difference of opinion, but none can doubt its prevalence. A thrifty and forehanded farmer adds year after year to his possessions; while his next neighbor, shiftless and indolent, allows his affairs to go at loose ends; his fields are overgrown with weeds, debts accumulate, the homestead is mortgaged, then comes the foreclosure and the red flag hangs over his door, "Going! going! gone!" Who is the purchaser? The thrifty neighbor; as it is written, "To him that hath shall be given." The unused talent is taken away; while he who is faithful over a few things is promoted to a place of larger influence and responsibility.

But back of the Rural Reckoning is another scene, projected on the skies. It is the Final Judgment. The King is seated on his throne, and the multitudes are assembled before him to render an account of their stewardship. This is a matter which profoundly concerns us.

Great God, what do I see and hear!
The end of things created;
The Judge of all mankind appear
On clouds of glory seated.
The trumpet sounds; the graves restore
The dead which they contained before.
Prepare, my soul, to meet him!"

It should be noted that the Parable of the Talents was not intended to include all. It was addressed by our Lord to his disciples; and its immediate application is to such as acknowledge the ownership of the householder in the talents committed to them. The "man who traveled into a far country" divided his goods only to those of his own household; but with God it is otherwise: "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." He does, indeed, distribute special gifts to the members of his household; but the usual blessings of providence and the incidental blessings of grace are upon all; and for these, each must render an account in the Great Day.

I call attention, now, to such as are left out of the Parable; who have no place there because they leave God out of their lives. It was a sad fate that befell the "unprofitable servant"; but in the divine economy there are multitudes who refuse to be considered as servants at all; and a severer retribution awaits them, because they either ignore God or fight against him.

The men in the Parable were honest men. Not even the trustee of the one talent presumed to deny the property right of the householder or to appropriate that talent to his own use. He was punished not for embezzlement but for failure to improve his trust. Of how much sorer punishment, then, must they be deserving who are left out of the Parable because they live as if their Lord had no claim whatever upon them? If the unworthy servant shall be beaten with few stripes, then, obviously, he who withholds himself altogether from service shall be beaten with many.

There is "the Self-made Man." You have heard his story; "I began life as a poor boy; and whatever I am is due to myself alone. How well I remember my first dollar, and the satisfaction with which I said, 'This is mine.' By thrift and industry I added to it from time to time; and now, behold me! I am the architect and builder of my own fortune." Observe, he leaves God wholly out of the reckoning. He seems oblivious of the fact that the physical and mental strength, by which he has been enabled to accumulate, is heaven's gift. Thus the King of Babylon stood upon his palace roof, surveying his possessions. Egypt, Arabia, Syria, lay prostrate at his feet. On the walls of the royal buildings were panoramic views of the great triumphs. And his heart swelled within him as he proudly said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" But it is written, "While the word was in his mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, 'O king, thy kingdom is departed from thee!'" Thus is it ever with the man who forgets God. The phantom of his greatness fades into nothingness. No man can plume himself on self-sufficiency. How shall such an one appear in judgment before God? Or whither shall he go? "To his own place." His pride stripped off, his possessions dropping from his trembling hands, he goes forth into eternity a homeless soul. God was not in all his thoughts; therefore he cannot be at home with God.

And there is the Self-centered Man. He has a hundred hands like Briareus; and they are all employed in grasping for self. He has a hundred voices, like

the Horse Leech's daughters, all crying, "Give, give!" Our Western ranchmen detest the lawless fellow who, having no herd of his own, makes it his business to gather in "mavericks," that is, cattle without a brand. He is the Ishmael of the plains; his hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against him. We meet with his counterpart everywhere; the man whose only thought is to get and hoard and use for himself. He is a poor cousin of Alexander the Great, who subjugated the world and grieved because there was nothing more to conquer; who fell into a chronic melancholy because he could not make the ivy grow upon his palace walls; who gave himself up to revelry and died in a drunken debauch. Here he lies dead, under his table. You may thrust him aside with your foot. Whither has he gone? To judgment; to meet the God for whom he made no place in his busy life. And what shall he say for himself there? What is there for any man to say, who, living on God's bounty, has refused to acknowledge him?

And there is the Infidel; meanest of men. He not only ignores the great Giver, but makes use of his gifts against him. The breath in his nostrils is of the bounty of God. The power to reason about spiritual things, the training which he has received in a Christian community, the very opportunity of forensic disputation, these are all from God. And he uses them like the man in the tragedy of Æschylus, who shot the eagle with a shaft feathered from its own wing. Thomas Paine, Hume, Bradlaugh, Robert Ingersoll, all were trained under the Evangel, and all employed their God-given talents in fighting

against God, crying, "Let us break his bands asunder and cast away his cords from us!" Voltaire, the arch infidel of history, owed not only his extraordinary endowment but his splendid culture to the Gospel, yet his manuscripts were signed with the legend "*Ecrasez l'Infame!*" that is, "Crush the wretch!" by whom he meant the Only-begotten and Well-beloved Son of God.

I attended a meeting in Metropolitan Temple in London, some years ago, when Joseph Parker addressed himself with impressive power to this theme: "The Indebtedness of the Unbelieving World to God for the Incidental Blessings of his Gospel." He multiplied the items in the long account until it was made to appear that the very weapons which are used by infidels against the religion of Christ are taken from his arsenal: then, raising both his hands, he cried thrice with startling effect, "Stop thief!" No doubt this was sensational; but the proposition was quite honest and fair. It would be seemly in those who array themselves against religion to stop and ask whether there is not a violation of common honesty in breathing God's air and living on the bounty of his providence, while in open rebellion against his authority. If the Bible is true, if there is to be a Final Judgment, if the servants of the householder are ultimately to render an account to him for the honest and wise use of goods entrusted to them, what is to become of such men?

And there again is the Social Outlaw: the man who, depending on God's beneficence for all that makes life worth living, devotes himself to the injury of his fellow men. What shall be said of the rum-seller;

the red-handed offender who gains his livelihood by robbing the honest workmen of his hard-earned wages and his wife and children of their food and raiment; whose business is to defy law, corrupt politics, destroy the peace of households and slay the bodies and souls of men? He stands in the doorway of his fastness, sleek and smiling, with a solitaire on his bosom, saying like the spider, "Will you walk into my parlor?" and within are the bones of the foolish.

Or what shall be said of the gambler; whose only gain is by others' loss? At this moment there is unusual activity in our police circles on account of the prevalence of this evil; but there are developments in connection with society life which make the professional gambler seem but small game. It is reported on good authority that gambling of a most notorious sort is carried on by what is known as "the smart set." A young man was recently invited to partake of the hospitality of one of our Fifth Avenue homes, where, in the course of the evening, he lost a considerable amount of money on the green-baize field. The next morning he proposed to give his check to his hostess for the amount due; which was accepted with the remark, "You will please remain here until my butler goes out and cashes it."—This is only a single case in point. Words are lacking to characterize the shameless infamy of women who thus debase their womanhood and outrage the sacred rites of hospitality. It was long ago that Solomon wrote, "At the window of my house I looked through my casement and behold among the simple ones I discerned a young man void of understanding, passing through the street

near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. So she caught him and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, 'I have peace offerings with me.' With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattery of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his vitals; as a bird hasteneth to the snare, knowing not that it is for his life. She hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chamber of death." To this sort of female blandishment I know of no counterpart save in the harpies of mythological story; they were repulsive creatures with the fair faces of women but bodies of unclean and voracious birds, armed with beak and claws wherewith to prey upon the bodies of men. There may be some among us who question the truth of a literal Judgment, but in all reason I submit that Providence is a hopeless tangle unless there be a final reckoning for such as these. And whither shall they go? If there were no Hell, one must be devised in order to satisfy the demands of equity in answer to the cry of wronged and outraged souls, "How long, O Lord, ere thou avenge us?"

And there is the Thoughtless Man; who does not wilfully antagonize God, but simply ignores him. He is an honest man, as the world goes; that is, he robs nobody and meets his obligations when due. He is a courteous, affable gentleman, it may be; good-natured and well-disposed toward all. He is

portrayed in the Parable of "The Rich Fool," of whom it is written, "His ground brought forth plentifully: and he said within himself, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my Soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." But at this point God, of whom he had taken no account, broke in upon his soliloquy saying, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be?" Let it be noted that this man is not charged with any crime. He was "an honest gentleman." Was he? Can any man be regarded as honest who, meeting all his other obligations, appropriates to personal uses a trust divinely committed to him? "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." It should be clear that no form of dishonesty is for a moment to be compared with the heinous sin of robbing God. —And is this man a gentleman? Will a gentleman accept a favor without courteous recognition? Yet he takes the gifts of divine providence and offers no return. I say no man can be honest who, living to-day on God's bounty, breathing his air and eating his food, will not to-night get down upon his knees and gratefully say, "I thank thee."—Or, is he, really, a kindly man? It is true, perhaps, that he would not for any consideration wrong his fellow man; yet he rejects Christ, who came as the mani-

festation of divine love to deliver him from sin. He treads under foot the Son of God, and counts the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing (Heb. 10, 29).

I have spoken of those who are left out of the Parable of the Talents; left out because they are not servants of the great Householder and not because they are to be in any wise exempt from the adjustments of the Judgment Day. Where now do we find ourselves? Do our hearts condemn us? Have we taken the gracious gifts of God and denied or forgotten him? What then shall we do? Let us make haste to enroll ourselves, by repentance and faith, among those who belong in the Parable because they acknowledge the lordship of God.

When Doctor Paley was a student at the University, he fell in with bad associates and gave himself up to dissipation. One morning at five o'clock he was awakened by a hand on his shoulder, and beside him stood one of his companions in the debauch of the previous night, who said, "Paley, you are a fool; you must turn over a new leaf. I was once where you are; but it is now too late to mend. It has pleased God to endow you with many gifts, and you are wasting them in riotous living. It behooves you to repent and start anew; and now's your time." That morning Paley fell upon his knees beside his bed, remorseful and penitent, and renewed his vows. If any of us have been going wrong, putting God into the background and serving ourselves, it is high time to make confession before him. We have been great sinners, but God is a great forgiver. And this is a true saying,

"the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin."

And, having repented and determined that henceforth the Lord shall have due recognition in our lives, let us take heed and beware of the sin of the unfaithful servant who "hid his talent in the ground." It is not enough that we shall ultimately return to God what he gave us; he claims his own "with usury." Both principle and interest are his; and he demands them. The only acceptable report is this: "Lo here is thy gift; it hath gained somewhat for thee."

Let penitence, therefore, be followed by consecration; and our consecration must be entire and absolute. The tithe is not enough, the superflux is not enough; all that we have and all that we are must be given to God.

We regard it as "an hard saying" when Jesus demands of the Young Ruler, "Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor; and come and follow me." It is a significant fact, however, that Mr. Carnegie, in accounting for his resolution to be the executor of his own estate, devoting his vast possessions to beneficence, refers to this very saying of Jesus, which he rightly interprets to mean, "Put all that thou hast at the disposal of thy Lord, for the welfare of men." We have not millions, probably, to lay before him; but the important point is this: whatever we have belongs to him. Our only right of possession is stewardship with its attendant responsibilities. God said to Moses, "What is that in thy hand?"—"A rod."—"Serve me with it." He said to David, "What is that in thy hand?"—"A harp."

—"Come, sing my praises." He said to Bezaleel, "What is that in thy hand?"—"A chisel."—"Adorn my house with it." He said to Shamgar, "What is that in thy hand?"—"An ox-goad."—"Up, scourge my enemies with it!" Thus whatever we have, he demands of us. When Frances Ridley Havergal was converted she found that her richest treasure was a melodious voice which she straightway consecrated to Christ, saying,

"Take my voice and let it sing,
Always—only—for my King."

No matter what our possession may be, wealth, learning, physical or mental strength, personal charm or beauty, power of conversation, the Lord gave it and the Lord would use it.

"Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee;
Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in endless praise;
Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt choose;
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne;
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee."

THE MAN OF BETHPHAGE

(A Sacramental Meditation on Palm Sunday.)

"And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them."—Matt. 21 : 3.

On the morning of the twelfth of April in the year of the World 4034, year of the Roman Empire 783, year of our Lord 30, a man was going about his usual tasks in the little village of Bethphage, just across the gorge of the Cedron and distant two miles or thereabouts from the Holy City. He was a farmer, perhaps, or a handicraftsman, engaged with one or more partners in some sort of humble traffic with Jerusalem, as appears from the fact that their beast of burden was tethered near by in the open way.

Two men of the peasant class approached in apparent haste, looking about them. On seeing the tethered ass with her foal, their anxiety was apparently relieved; they drew near and began to untie her. The owner probably knew these men, since for three years they had been attached to the service of Jesus, who had frequently passed this way.

It is not strange that he resented the unwonted liberty which was being taken with his property. "What would ye?" he asked. They replied, "The

Master hath need of them." No further objection was made; and they, leading the ass with her colt, proceeded on their way.

I think, however, the man stood gazing after them with perplexity in his eyes as they threaded the path leading to Bethany. But presently he understood; for around a spur of the mountain emerged a caravan of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, waving palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" In the midst rode Jesus, all majesty and meekness; while the multitude cast their garments in the way and palm branches, torn from the overhanging trees, crying with increasing fervor as they approached the city, "Hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

The man of Bethphage, mentioned only once and then without a name, here standing, gazing with wonder at Prince Shiloh and his strange cortege, suggests some helpful truths for our contemplation.

Observe, to begin with, *the Comprehensiveness of God's Great Plan.* The Heidelberg Catechism says, "The Providence of God is his almighty and everywhere present power, whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds heaven and earth and all creatures; so that leaf and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things come to us, not by chance, but by his Fatherly hand." The same impressive thought is thus presented in the Westminster Confession of Faith: "God's works of Providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving, and governing all his creatures and all their actions." In other words, the Plan in its tre-

mendous sweep includes all things; men and angels, worlds and atoms, birds and beasts and creeping things.

But through this universal scheme of Providence there runs an undertone of "special providence," whose objective point is the Atonement of Christ and the final ushering in of the Golden Age.

It is interesting to observe the circumstantiality with which Christ is set forth in prophecy; his miraculous birth, the very time and place of its occurrence; his life and ministry, the manner of his preaching, his wonderful works; his character in minutest detail; his betrayal, the thirty pieces of silver in the traitor's hand; his trial, scourging, sufferings on the cross; the cup of bitter wine, the allotting of the seamless robe; his death, burial and resurrection from the dead.

Nor is this all: a devout perusal of the Old Testament shows that its Psalms and Chronicles, no less than its prophecies; its ceremonial precepts; its comprehensive cult of rite and symbol, were part and parcel of the Plan. In the long journey from Paradise to the cross all things seem subsidized to the uses of salvation: the lamb on Abel's altar, the ram caught by its horns in the thicket on Moriah, the hecatomb which was offered by Solomon at the dedication of the House Magnifical, the dove returning to the ark with the olive branch, the ravens feeding Elijah in the ravine of Cherith, the burning bush, Aaron's rod that budded; in short, everything along the way seems to be moving in the mighty drift of events toward the cross.

Our hearts are enlarged as we thus reflect on God, sitting in the midst of passing events like a

weaver at the loom, casting his shuttle to and fro and weaving in and out as warp and woof, all things great and little; day and night, war and peace, pain and pleasure, men, beasts, and birds of the air. And when at last the thread is cut, to signify that history has reached its consummation, the Weaver will arise and clothe himself with the finished work of his hands; for history is but the weaving of a garment for the King.

We observe, also, in connection with this incident at Bethpage, that *Our Possessions are included in this Mighty Plan.* The ass' colt had been set forth in prophecy some hundreds of years before by Isaiah and Zechariah; and when the fulness of time was come, at the very striking of the clock, the Lord drawing near to Olivet with the passover pilgrims knew just where the needed beast of burden was tethered in the open street awaiting him.

There is deep significance in the words of the two disciples, "The Lord hath need of them." Let it be noted that Jesus was here laying claim to his own. We are accustomed to speak of the Master as a homeless and penniless man. At his birth he was laid in a borrowed cradle; on his journeys to and fro he was entertained in the homes of other people, as it is written, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head"; and finally he was buried in a borrowed sepulchre. "Borrowed?" Nay; the manger in Bethlehem was his; the homes that welcomed him in Bethany and Jerusalem and Capernaum were his; the new-made grave in Joseph's Garden was his. They who called themselves

"owners" had but borrowed from him; and their ownership was mere stewardship, until he should claim his own.

Our so-called possessions are a trust; we have no fee simple right in anything; we hold what we have at the Lord's pleasure; and it is in the nature of robbery to demur when he calls for it.

But how are we to understand those words, "the Lord hath need"? The necessity here referred to was not merely that prophecy might be fulfilled, as it was written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, thy King cometh sitting on an ass' colt" (Zech. 9, 9); but, above all, that the silhouette of Christ himself might be filled out. He must come to his own not like Cæsar or Alexander, with waving banners and trumpet's blare, but as Shiloh, the Prince of Peace. Rome need not tremble; here is no revolt. The kingdom of this King is not of this world.

It would be unspeakably incongruous to think of Jesus, on this occasion, approaching the Holy City in a chariot drawn by war horses. Nay; he would ride as the priests of the olden time rode, on white asses, when they went about their errands of mercy and devotion.

So far as we are aware, his journeyings were always afoot. He had walked through Galilee with staff in hand preaching the Evangel. O, patient, unwearying Son of God! But now that Coronation Day has come, he will ride to Jerusalem as beseems the Prince of Peace preparing the way for salvation. And the dumb servant of the man of Bethphage was "needed" that Christ might thus appropriately bring in the truce of God.

It is still further suggested that not our possessions only, but *We ourselves are included in the Divine Plan.* Our place is not conditioned on the measure of our gifts. It is written of Naaman the Syrian that he was "a mighty man of valor"; yet he was no more necessary to the plot of the drama than the little maid in his palace. Who was this man of Bethphage? A mere nameless nobody. His beast of burden is made more conspicuous than he. And yet, far back in that ancient prophecy and all along the *Sacra Via* to the final triumph, there was a place for him.

And his place was known by Christ, who on this occasion called him to occupy it. It is said that Alexander the Great was able to call the roll of all the officers in his army; but the Captain of our Salvation knows the humblest in the rank and file, and assigns places to all.

The whole Eternal Plan is present to his mind; it passes ever, as in panoramic scenes, before him. He saw the ass and her foal in the open way; he foreknew the interposition of their owner and his subsequent consent; at no point did the incident swerve an hair's breadth from his purpose. In like manner we are ever present to his mind; and the humblest of Christ's followers has a personal relation to the coming of his kingdom, that "far-off, divine event to which the whole creation moves." It is the glory of human life that we are thus called to work together with God.

Our lesson, in fine, is this—and here lies the secret of success in the spiritual life—*we must hold ourselves and all our possessions, always, at our Lord's command.* The man of Bethphage had borrowed his beast of burden from God. He was at liberty to use it in the trans-

portation of his wares and produce to the market by the city gate until the Lord should require it for other uses. The surrender must be instant when the real owner should say, "I have need of it." There must be no demur, no reluctance, no questioning; the trust must straightway be given over to Christ's use. All the things that we call ours are to be held in like manner until our Lord calls for them. No mark of ownership is to be put upon them. Our physical strength, gifts and talents, our wealth, every penny of it, must be kept thus at his command; else we are not loyal to him.

One day at the beginning of the Thirteenth Century, when Innocent III, the most magnificent of Popes, was walking in the piazza of the Lateran, a man approached him, clad in a sackcloth robe and girt about the loins with a hempen girdle. The Holy Father repelled him with a motion of contempt. But that night he dreamed; and in his dream he saw the Church of St. John Lateran toppling to its fall and the brown figure of the monk upholding it with raised hands. This was St. Francis of Assisi, father of the Barefoot Friars, who came upon the arena of history at a time of spiritual declension, when the church was demoralized by wealth and luxury and worldliness. He summoned around him a company of like-thinking men who took upon them a vow of perpetual poverty; their watchword being, "Nothing is mine." They went about in the garb of mendicants, calling upon all men to repent, denouncing the abuses of authority in the church and proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. Whatever our opinion may be of the subsequent influence

of these Friars when they, in turn, were overcome by greed of power and wealth, we must concede that the founder of their order was a mighty reformer in his time; and but for such as he, who, at critical periods in the history of a decadent church, have renounced the world and preached the gospel of entire surrender, it would appear that the light of the evangel must have been extinguished among men. His sweet spirit of entire devotion may be inferred from the hymn which he wrote for use among his followers:

Love sets my heart on fire;
Love sets my heart on fire!
When thus with Christ I fought,
Peace made we after ire;
For first from Him was brought
Dear Love's veracious fire;
The love of Christ hath wrought
Such strength I cannot tire;
He dwells in soul and thought;
Love sets my heart on fire!"

We are living in an age of worldliness. The purity and power of the Church are threatened by greed of earthly possessions. The fire of a false incense burns on her altars. She holds the world's exchequer in her hands; and O, what possibilities of conquest are hers, if only she were willing to say in sincerity, "Nothing is mine!" But how little of the vast possessions of Christian people is apparently held at the command of their Lord. The owner of the tethered beast is ever objecting to the Lord's unloosing it. The mere tithe of a tithe is given at the word, "The Lord hath need of it." The great enterprises of Christ's kingdom are ever languishing

for want of a true conception of stewardship. The nations that lie in darkness and the shadow of death await the Evangel in vain, while the church holds her purse strings with an iron grip, saying, "This is mine; deprive me not of it!" O beloved, nothing is ours when Christ calls for it.

The prevailing sin of our time is covetousness. Men are adding field to field; millionaires are envious of multimillionaires; molten gold is poured down the throat of some dying Crassus every day. Our youth are exhorted to carve their way to fortune; the industrial virtues are emphasized in "Missions" and "Settlements" at the expense of faith, hope and charity: while the Lord who cries in the market-place, "Give me mine own," is put off with our paltry superflux. It is the fashion to think that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of things which he possesseth. There are some in our churches who are dying of an unholy jaundice contracted in the worship of the world's yellow god. Let the warning be thundered in their ears, "Take heed and beware of all covetousness!" There is no "my" or "mine"; the Lord owns all. "Property is robbery," said Proudhon; so it is, whenever it is withheld from God. To hold all at his command is to be "rich toward God." Thus it is written, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

We are not informed what the man of Bethphage did when he saw the caravan of pilgrims, with Christ in the midst, and heard them shouting "Hosanna!" But I love to think that he hastened down the path, across the Cedron, up the slopes of Olivet, and fell

into line with the procession, adding his voice to the cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Thus let us find our places in the retinue of the King, honoring his requisition of both ourselves and our possessions, and giving ourselves up with abandon to the enthusiasm of his advent. Our Master's call is in these words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me"; and again, "If thou woulds't enter into life, Go, sell all that thou hast and come and follow me."

PAUL'S GOODS AND CHATTELS

"The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus bring with thee, when thou comest, and the books, but especially the parchments."—2 Timothy 4, 13.

An old man in the Mamertine Jail: it is a noisome place, dank and mouldy. He shivers with the cold; a sense of loneliness overwhelms him. We have seen this man before; small of stature, with stooping shoulders; it is Paul, whom Renan calls "the ugly little Jew." His bodily presence indeed is mean; but his intellect is "bright as an electric spark shot off from the finger of God."

He is writing to his friend Timothy, the young pastor of the Ephesian Church, his spiritual son. It is slow work; his eyes are dim, and the light is poor; and his fingers are cramped with age and "oft infirmities." Let us follow his trembling stylus: "Do—thy—diligence—to come—shortly—unto me." Lonely soul! It is little wonder that he longs for a friend, with the shadows closing about him. He continues, "Bring with thee the cloak that I left at Troas, and the books, but *especially the parchments.*"

There is pathos in this brief inventory of his possessions. Time was when he had abundance of this world's goods. He was the son of a Roman citizen; educated in the aristocratic school of Gamaliel at Jerusalem; chosen to a seat in the Sanhedrin or Supreme

Court of Israel, with a bright future before him. But at his conversion he surrendered all, his words being "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And here we have the pitiful residue; a cloak, some books and parchments. But though reduced to poverty, he makes no complaint. Nay, rather his want seems treasure. "Reduced to poverty"? He counts himself rich toward God.

Nor is this inventory so paltry as it seems. Here is a cloak for the body; books for the delectation of the mind; and parchments for the uses of the immortal soul. Thus the brief total of his possessions covers the entire necessity of the tripartite man.

I. *The Lesson of the Cloak.* It is suggested that this was a "vestment," or ministerial gown. But that is the last thing which Paul the prisoner would have desired. The tentmakers and fishermen of the early church were content to preach in homespun, leaving silken gowns for us. No, the "cloak" was a garment for warmth, doubly needed because the winter was drawing on. It had been "left at Troas"; probably when he departed from that city to answer the call of the Man of Macedonia, whom he had seen in a vision beckoning and calling, "Come over and help us!" He had gone in haste, without luggage; leaving cloak, books and parchments in the care of Carpus, to be called for.

The request for the cloak shows us that Paul, notwithstanding his great learning and piety, was but a common man. We stand in awe of him walking along the heights of transcendental theology and sublimated devotion; we wish sometimes that he

would descend to our level; and here he does it. He had just been saying "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." How far above the spirit of the average man! But just then the chill of the dungeon strikes to the marrow of his bones; he shivers—and comes down: "Bring the cloak with you."

If Paul had been a Christian Scientist he would not have troubled himself about the cloak. He would have rubbed his blue fingers together as he shivered, saying, "Nonsense; this isn't a chill; it's only a belief. Cloaks and mufflers? O no, thank you. I'm not cold." But Paul was no fool. He knew better than to give the palpable lie to his senses; therefore he wrote, "Bring the cloak with you."

It shows, also, that Paul was not without sentiment. The old cloak had been his companion amid the vicissitudes of his missionary life. It was shiny at the seams, perhaps, and worn along the edges. It had been wet with dews that fell upon him asleep among the mountains of Macedonia, stained by the sea in his three shipwrecks, soiled with the dust of the Roman roads over which he had wearily trudged. It was a warm, honest cloak; which had sheltered him in wintry storms; the very cloak, perhaps, which he had drawn about his bruised body when he came to life, after the shower of stones, outside the gates of Lystra. A garment which has shared our sorrows thus, adjusting itself to our physical angu-

larities, makes a friendly place for itself, and—call it sentiment, if you will—it is never quite like other garments to us.

But, above all, this request indicates that Paul was a man of common sense, in that he was disposed to give due attention to his physical needs. His was a poor, homely, pain-racked body; but being the best he had for use in his Lord's service, he desired to take good care of it. He repeatedly speaks of the body as the temple of the Lord : witness the indignant protest addressed to the Corinthians on account of their physical excesses: "What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are God's."

The redemptive work of Jesus was for the deliverance of the whole man. The body as well as the soul is sprinkled with his blood, and is included in the apocalyptic glory; as it is written, "He shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Wherefore it behooves us to look to its welfare (Phil. 3, 21). The body, as belonging to Christ, should be sheltered from storm, exercised by day and rested by night, provided with wholesome food, never poisoned with alcoholic or other noxious draughts, and every way kept in condition as a suitable vehicle for the operations of the Spirit of God. This is the Gospel as well as the Law. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye pre-

sent your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12, 1).

II. The Lesson of the Books. We may venture a conjecture as to this bundle of books; a copy or two of Greek philosophy; Logic and Rhetoric; rabbinical writings; the Poems of Aratus, from whom Paul quoted in his famous sermon on Mar's Hill; and probably a few text-books left over from his University life.

In Dr. Channing's Essay on Self-Culture he enlarges on Paul's affection for his books, "God be thanked for them! They are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levellers. They give to all who will faithfully use them the society, the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am, no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling. If the sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof, if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise, and Shakespeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship; and I may become a cultivated man though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live."

In the sum total of life more depends on the quality of our reading than we think. Books are the pabulum of the mind. They furnish the fibre of national character. At the close of the eighteenth

century all France was shaken to its very center by the translation of Chambers' Encyclopedia, with infidel interpretations by Diderot, and others of similar views. A tidal wave of unbelief was set in motion which has left its disastrous traces to this day.

At the close of the Franco-Prussian war it was asserted by Père Hiacinthe that, in his judgment, the defeat of the French army was a foregone conclusion, because it went forth enfeebled by a century of infidel teaching to meet a body of soldiers, every one of whom carried a Bible in his knapsack.

The social life of any community may be determined by its literature. The heart of London was stirred to its depths by the wrongs of seamstresses as sung by Thomas Hood:

"Stitch, stitch, stitch!
With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread.

"Stitch, stitch, stitch!
O men with sisters dear,
O men with mothers and wives;
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives."

The same holds true of individual life. Washington Irving read Sinbad the Sailor by the glimmer of a stolen candle and meanwhile practised sleeping on an oaken floor and accustomed himself to salt pork, which he hated, in preparation for running away to sea.

John Angell James says his whole life was corrupted by a pamphlet which he found on a book

stand and examined but fifteen minutes as he was passing by.

As a man readeth, so is he. Tell me your morning newspaper and I will divine your intellectual bias. Introduce me to your libraries and I will undertake a more accurate diagnosis of your general character.

It is commonly supposed that the reading habit is a good thing; but that depends. It is like the eating habit, which is either good or bad according to one's bill of fare. Lord Bacon said "Reading maketh a full man." If so, the need of discrimination is obvious; since mere "fulness" is likely to induce dyspepsia. Nor is it always true that "knowledge is power"; the knowledge of evil is pure weakness. A wise humorist has recently said, "It is better to know a few things that are so, than a great many things that are not so." It may be set forth as a kindred truth that a few wholesome books, well read and digested, are better than whole libraries of indifferent or pernicious literature. In these days when bound volumes are turned out by machinery at the cost of a few pennies, it is obviously the part of wisdom to select with care. Prove all books: hold fast that which is good.

III. *The Lesson of the Parchments.* These were, probably, scrolls of Scripture; the Law and the Prophets, with copies of the recently written Gospels which were at this time being circulated among the Church. It is this sort of literature which nourishes and enriches the soul. Wherefore Paul, in his message to Timothy, emphasizes their importance, saying "Bring with thee cloak and the books, *but especially the parchments.*" For what shall it profit a

man to care for his body and nourish his mind if his immortal soul be left to languish and die?

There are some things in the Scriptures, of supreme spiritual value, which can be found nowhere else. "There's wit there, ye'll get there, ye'll find nae ither where."

First, there is the Plan of Salvation from sin. The sacred books of the false religions have much to say about personal and social duty, but in none of them can be found an answer to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" Saved, that is, from the consequences which, under the Law, are bound to follow sin. The Scriptures present the atonement of Christ, on condition of faith, as an open door into spiritual and eternal life.

Second, there is the divine Rule of Character. The man who is washed in the blood of Jesus is directed to the Law as set forth in the Decalogue and in the "Sermon on the Mount," which is Christ's exposition of it: in addition to which, Christ himself is presented as the living exemplar of righteousness. By following in his steps he fulfills the Law and develops character, growing unto the full stature of a man (Romans 8 : 1–4).

Third, there is Direction for Service in the Kingdom of God. It is this which makes life tell. The salvation which was purchased by Christ is more than deliverance from hell, more than character-building; it is usefulness, above all. And no man lives a useful life who does not invest his energies, beyond all things that perish with the using, for the divine glory in the setting up of an Earthly Kingdom of truth and righteousness.

It thus appears that Paul was right in desiring "*especially*" the parchments. He could dispense with the cloak, if need be, however he might shiver without it. Nor were the books of vital importance; though they would relieve the painful monotony of his prison life. But the parchments he must have; and so must we. The Bible is our *sine qua non*, because it ministers to the needs of the immortal man.

This is the field where hidden lies
The pearl of price unknown:
The merchant is divinely wise
Who makes that pearl his own.

The Bible is the book for youth, when, "life goes a-Maying with nature, hope and poesy." It is the book for middle age; when the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches spread their snares before us. It is the book for the aged, who losing their hold on time gaze, dim-eyed, toward the mysteries of the world beyond. It is, above all, the book for the dying hour. Ah, there's no book like the Bible then! Read me now the Twenty-third Psalm, "For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Read me now the Eighth of Romans, "There is therefore no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Read me the Fourteenth of John, "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." Read me, now when my eyes are filming, the Vision of the Heavenly City, "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Thus it appears that Paul's inventory of worldly goods was not so paltry as the casual reader would suppose. The cloak had its value, and the books also, "but *especially* the parchments." The parchments are indispensible: for they cover the nakedness and feed the hunger of the soul. Wherefore, as we care for our eternal destiny, let us be loyal to the Scriptures, searching them as for hid treasure, heeding their admonitions, loving their exceeding great and precious promises, finding in them the riches of divine grace. Let us take them as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, guiding us till death—and beyond it.

RELIGION BY INHERITANCE

Behold the pattern of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made. Joshua 22, 28.

The war of conquest was over and the tribes were in undisturbed possession of the Promised Land. It was an unspeakable delight, after years of bondage and wandering in the wilderness, to turn to the usual occupations of peace, and rest each under his own vine and fig-tree.

But presently an incident occurred which threatened the unity of the young commonwealth. It was rumored that a great altar was being erected by the trans-Jordanic tribes to rival the brazen altar of the Tabernacle. The suspicion was confirmed by those dwelling to the North, who saw the structure rising, stone upon stone, "a great altar to see." An outburst of indignation followed; there was a blowing of rams' horns and a rallying for war. But wiser counsels prevailed. A commission of inquiry was appointed, consisting of Phineas and ten princes of the tribes, who met their offending brethren in Gilead, and presented their protest: "What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of our fathers?" The answer was a complete vindication, to this effect: that the altar had been reared not

for the offering of oblations or sacrifices but as a witness and memorial of the faithfulness of God to their fathers and of their fathers' devotion to him. It meant no new departure; but, on the contrary, as a faithful copy and facsimile of the brazen altar at Shiloh, it was designed to maintain the integrity of the ancestral faith and cement the unity of the separated tribes. "God forbid," they said, "that we should rebel against Jehovah. Behold, the pattern of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made!"

The explanation was satisfactory. A soft answer turneth away wrath. The deputation returned with a report that there was no ground for offense. And the altar on the heights was thenceforth called *Ed*, meaning "testimony"; because, as they said, "It shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God."

We find here a suggestion of *Traditionalism in Religion.* The fact of Heredity is constantly emphasized in recent science; but not more so than in Holy Writ. The physical characteristics of the fathers are passed on to the generations after them. The same is true of intellectual power or weakness. Poets, orators, warriors and statesmen, as a rule, have sons and daughters "after their kind."

Now that the smoke of our Civil War has cleared away, it is quite safe to assign to Stonewall Jackson a place in the roll-call of our mighties. If we would know the secret of his moral greatness we must go back to 1748, when Elizabeth Cummins, a young Saxon, six feet in stature, stalwart and beautiful, took passage for America. John Jackson, a Scotch-Irishman of heroic mold, was a fellow passenger. These two, on the ocean, plighted their troth. And

they were the forebears of Stonewall Jackson; in whom were thus combined the historic virtues of Puritan and Covenanter. Was it strange that he, true to the altar of his fathers, should have distinguished himself not only on the high places of the field but in the maintenance of his Christian faith?

But attention is called to the fact that vices as well as virtues are transmitted to succeeding generations. The old fashion was to call this "original sin"; but, under whatever name, the doctrine is now universally recognized as a scientific fact.

We are now prepared to find that creeds and moral codes pay deference to the past. Hence the current outcry against "traditionalism." In one of the camp-meeting Songs of the South the refrain occurs, "Baptis' born, Baptis' bred, Baptis' till I die." The important question is, How far are we justified in building our altars thus, after the pattern of the fathers?

Let us at the outset lay down this proposition: *It is nothing against a doctrine or precept that our ancestors approved it.* It is important to say this, because in some quarters there is an illogical and unaccountable prejudice against the past. There are many, nowadays, who, like the Athenians, "spend their time in nothing else but either to hear or to tell some new thing." They are ready to displace the personal God by Law or Energy or any other recently discovered fetish. They push aside the Bible to make way for guesses and hypotheses. They treat the miracles of Revelation as incredible; but yield cheerful assent to miracles wrought upon corner-stones and rubber-plants. Everything is acceptable save

that on which antiquity has placed its seal. Ring out the old, ring in the new!

But why should a truth be discredited on the ground that our fathers believed it? Is the air any less necessary to life because the passing generations have in no wise improved upon it? Is spring water any the worse because the people of the old time drank it? Or, shall we reject the sunlight because our forebears basked in it?

A step further: *The fact that a truth has been accepted from time immemorial creates an antecedent presumption in its favor.* It is a well-known and universally accepted principle in logic, that the presumption is always in favor of the *statu quo.* A physician who refuses to recognize this in the practice of therapeutics would be discredited forthwith. In Courts of Law a precedent holds until sufficient reason can be shown for new procedure. In religion no exception can be taken to the general rule. A man brought up as a Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Roman Catholic, may not rationally repudiate his ancestral faith until a just reason can be given for doing so. Nay, further, the son of infidel parents is bound by filial loyalty to abide in his inheritance until the bond is broken by a higher law.

One of the evil tendencies of our times is toward the disregard of the divine precept: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The sin of Absalom has been revived. In Paul's second letter to Timothy he enjoins him thus: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast

learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Of whom had Timothy learned these things? Of his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. Shame on the youth who thoughtlessly repudiates the belief of his parents! O double shame on him who turns his back on the memory of parental teaching and makes sport of it! "The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it."

A step further still (for it will be perceived that we are pursuing the argument of progressive approach): *The fact that a doctrine was believed by our fathers presents a strong cumulative argument in favor of it.* A proposition which has stood the test of centuries of controversy *pro* and *con* cannot be easily disposed of. The creeds or doctrinal symbols of the churches represent an inestimable amount of earnest prayerful thought. He who purchases an established business is expected to pay not only for the stock in hand but for "the good-will" of the establishment. If this rule be applied to our historic creeds, what a mighty appraisal shall be placed upon them! Take the Apostles' Creed. See the noble army of martyrs coming this way holding aloft that blood-stained banner of truth. See them dropping out along the path of the centuries, by thousands, at the beckoning of the flashing ax and the flaming fagot. It means something that truths like these have been red-stained in the agony of the ages. This "good-will" must be taken into the reckoning when we are discussing the question of waiving time-honored symbols

of doctrine. The cumulative weight of the painful controversy of centuries cannot be supplanted by passionate protestation against "hide-bound bondage to the past."

A step further brings us to the assertion that *there are certain truths which never change, but are, in the nature of the case, alike to the fathers and to us;* namely, the axioms and postulates. I speak now to Christian people; to such as have taken their position, by covenant vows, on these very axioms and postulates as the foundation of their religious life. I mean such truths as the Personality of God, the Divine Birth of Man and his consequent Immortality, Sin and the Atonement, the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Resurrection from the Dead, the Personality of the Spirit and his sovereign Work in the Sanctification of the Soul and its Preparation for the Eternal Life.

Such facts may be called in question by unbelievers, with some show of reason; but those who call themselves Christians are bound to accept the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and proceed from them, as a starting point, to the larger matters of faith and practice. This is what is meant by the injunction, "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God" (Heb. vi, 1).

What then is the meaning of this demand in certain quarters that we shall "get back to the original sources"? And what are we to understand by current discussions with reference to such doctrines as the divine Personality and the Immortality of the

Soul? A professor of mathematics says to his pupils, "There is an illimitable world of progress before you: I invite you to pursue the pathway of the stars. But if you would accomplish anything, or get anywhere, you must plant yourselves, at the outset, on the axioms and postulates of Science. Do not forget that two and two make four; and that a line is the shortest distance between two points. Those are established and self-evident facts." The youth who insisted upon demonstrating that two and two make four would spend his life in profound research and have nothing to show for it. An architect says to his workmen, "You are going twenty-two stories into the air; be careful to keep in perpendicular line with the foundations. If you move away from them, your building will come down rattling about your ears."

Here is a suggestion for "progressive thinkers." Some things must be taken for granted, that is, as established facts. If we insist on getting back of the postulates to the original source, we shall find ourselves blocked at every step. I read recently of a Southern negro, controlled by the superstitions of his race, who set out on an errand to a neighboring plantation. He had gone a mile, perhaps, when an owl hooted from the bough of an overhanging tree. It was an ill omen; he turned back straightway to re-begin his journey. He had gone some way again into the forest when a rabbit ran across his path. Another ill omen! And then he not only retraced his steps, but must needs go round by another road to his destination. There are men who think themselves friends of progress who pursue their quest of

truth in like manner; frightened by every doubt they turn back to the original sources; and they never get anywhere; their only progress is retrogression. These are the people who are "ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

The next step in our argument leads us to affirm that *the divergencies of opinion in our research for truth show the necessity of an ultimate standard of authority.* The use of reason is unchallenged; but reason is not enough; it shows its inadequacy in the fact that there are "many men of many minds." And while truth is one, the results of intellectual research are many. It would appear that if there is anywhere in the universe a good God, he must have given his children somewhere an authoritative direction for the quest of the great verities. And this is the claim of the Scriptures.

The relation of revelation to reason is clear. A skipper who would bring his cargo safe into port must sail by the ship's compass. Yet the fallibility of the ship's compass is shown by the many disasters which have recently occurred, owing to the deflection of the needle by the iron in the vessel's hulk. So when the skipper is in doubt he must needs consult his chart and take an observation of the heavens. The needle may be deflected, but the North Star never fails. Thus a man in honest pursuit of truth, uses his reason to the utmost; but, when bewildered, he turns to the authoritative word of God and resorts to the secret place of communion with him.

And this is ultimate; otherwise there is no *ultimatum.* The ship follows the rudder, the rudder

follows the compass, the compass follows the chart, and the chart is interpreted by observation of the skies. "If any man lack wisdom, therefore, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

Our next step brings us to *the possibilities of progress in the pursuit of truth.* The limitations which we have suggested leave us quite free. It is a mistake to think that freedom is found only in the absence of restraint. Is a kite freer when it breaks the cord that holds it? Is a ship freer, when loosed of her rudder she rocks helplessly in the trough of the sea? Is a locomotive freer when, leaving the track, it pursues its course across the open fields? Nay; true freedom is perfect accord with perfect law.

And within the boundaries of revelation there is illimitable room for freedom and for progress in religious paths. Truth is like the sun; put one of its beams through a prism and you have the seven primary colors, which correspond to the fundamental facts of religion. You cannot get behind the seven colors of the spectrum, but you may make infinite combinations and applications of them. Visit the Gobelin looms, or the laboratories where favril glass is made, and see what wonderful combinations of hue and tint are possible within the limitations of the seven colors. All true spiritual progress is made, likewise, along the paths and within the circumscription of divine revelation. Freebooters may rove the sea at will, but freighters, laden with God's cargoes, follow the schedule, pursue their appointed paths and reach their desired haven.

It remains only to speak of *personal responsibility*, as our last step in the argument. Let every man, hedged in only by the eternal limitations of the divine law, think for himself, and suffer no man to do his thinking for him. No inheritance of parental piety can inhibit or supersede the tremendous importance of personal thought and conviction. It is easy to accept a birthright; it is not so easy to work out one's own salvation; this must be done "with fear and trembling." If a man has inherited an error in belief, he is divinely bound to rid himself of it. A thief who pleads inherited kleptomania, or a drunkard who justifies himself on the ground that he has gotten dipsomania from his ancestors, is a coward. The struggle of life is against heredity. This makes men. We fight against the sins and errors of our ancestors; and God is with us. It behooves us to keep all the good and cast off the evil that has been transmitted to us. In filial loyalty we must give due weight to the faith and practice of our ancestors; but we shall not purge ourselves of personal liability save by directing our paths in the fear of God. Tennyson writes in his In Memoriam:

> The baby new to earth and sky,
> What time his tender palm is prest
> Against the circle of the breast,
> Has never thought that *This is I.*
>
> But as he grows he gathers much,
> And learns the use of *I and me*,
> And finds *I am not what I see*,
> *And other than the things I touch.*

A man has not really found himself until he has made this discovery, and can say *Ich bin ich.* Then and thereafter no inheritance of the fathers, no

priest nor council, can relieve him of the necessity and responsibility of blazing his own path heavenward with no fear except the fear of God. The faith of the fathers cannot save us any more than their sins can condemn us. "As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;' for the soul that sinneth it shall die." The presumption is in favor of the ancestral faith; but as a man loves life and immortality let him make it his own. It has no real spiritual value until it becomes his very own.

The newspapers say that a youth stood, yesterday, in front of one of our hotels and threw gold pieces to a scrambling crowd. It is quite safe to assert that he had not earned one of those gold pieces by his own industry. He was the heir of the sweat of his father's brow. But when all that treasure is thrown away and he, driven to poverty, is obliged to earn gold for himself, we may rest assured that he will not thus squander it. In like manner the value of a creed, which is above rubies or the gold of Ophir, comes not by inheritance but by appropriation. There are heirs who use their patrimony to their profit, and use it well. There are multitudes of Christians who receive the faith of their fathers in such manner that it becomes ingrained with their very being; an eternal gain, by which they are enriched toward God.

But of this let us be certain: no man can live spiritually by proxy. He cannot sin by proxy, nor be pardoned in that way. Each for himself must thoughtfully accept Christ, so that the blood shall

be sprinkled upon the lintels of his own heart. He cannot believe by proxy, nor can he thus work righteousness. Here is the solemn truth which throws us back upon our personal responsibility in all things pertaining to faith and practice:

We came alone into the world and alone pursue our way; alone we die and alone must stand in judgment: as it is written, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

A MAN AT HIS BEST

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life into life. And who is sufficient for these things?" II. Cor. 2, 14-16.

The Dignity of Man is much emphasized in these days. It rests in his divine origin; and in his relative position in the universe as set forth by Cowper:

> "I am monarch of all I survey,
> My right there is none to dispute;
> From the center all round to the sea
> I am lord of the fowl and the brute."

It rests, furthermore, in his capacity of high purpose and aspiration. "He carries in his brain," says Carlyle, "the geography of the universe and the unfathomable galaxies." His supremacy is affirmed, also, by his achievements. He makes the iron to swim, sends his voice echoing around the world, chains the lightning and despatches it upon his errands under the sea. He leads armies to conquest, uprears thrones and dynasties and makes for himself a diadem of glory. And what then? We throw life down and tread upon it as if it were a disappointing book, saying, "It does not end well." If this be all, then indeed do men "spend their

years as a tale that is told." For what is the sum total? Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners walk about the streets.

But Paul holds another view of the Dignity of Man. He conceives of it as measured by his relation to Christ. This Christ, as Son of God and Son of Man, is in Paul's philosophy the Mediator; who, stretching out one hand to the sinner and the other to a justly offended God, brings them into a sweet and eternal at-one-ment. He thus not only restores man to his original innocency, but brings him into a closer communion and more honorable co-operation with God. And this is the Ascent of Man, as Paul conceives it.

This thought is thrown into relief in our text, which presents the picture of a Triumphal Procession. All Rome is keeping holiday. Lo, the conquering hero comes! The streets are lined with spectators; they lean from the windows, they crowd the housetops. Triumphal arches span the approaches to the Forum; braziers for burning incense have been placed at intervals along the thoroughfares. A blast of trumpets! The procession draws near on the Appian Way. In the forefront the lictors, bearing fasces as symbols of their imperial authority. After them the Senators, a body of distinguished and venerable men. Then a line of trumpeters, rending the air with shrill blasts; followed by a train of wagons laden with spoils from battle-fields and vanquished cities: arms and armor, cloth of gold, statues, inlaid wares and ornaments, chests of treasure, gold and silver vases. Then a succession of floats, bearing models of fortified cities and strong-

holds, to emphasize the prowess of the returning veterans. Cages of lions and other ravenous beasts, with a troop of elephants, from the subjugated lands. A band of flute-players. A score of slaves, leading white bulls for sacrifice. Incense-burners, from whose swinging censers, as from the braziers by the wayside, rise clouds of heavy perfume. Then the Conqueror. Hail to the chief! Captive princes and magnates, bound with gold manacles to his chariot. A troop of prisoners, their faces downcast or defiant, exposed to the abuse and derision of the populace. Officers, courtiers, horsemen, footmen; the weary, triumphant host. And last of all, the rabble. On they surge toward the Capitoline Hill where a hecatomb of victims will be offered to great Jupiter, and awards proclaimed for deeds of prowess on the field.

This is the pageant which presents itself to the mind of Paul; but above and beyond it is the great Triumph for which it stands, the march of Emmanuel through history and onward to the Golden Age. The boast of the apostle is that he is a personal factor in this glorious event; and thus he presents his conception of the Dignity of Man.

In order to a full understanding of our text and its lesson, we may venture to fill out the silhouette by a comparison with other passages where Paul makes use of the same metaphor. For the ultimate triumph of Christ is constantly before his mind; and amid all trials, perils and discouragements, he finds inspiration in the assurance that, suffering with his Lord, he shall also reign with him.

He claims an honorable place, to begin with, *as a Soldier in the Ranks.* He keeps step with the vic-

torious host, who returning from the perils and hardships of camp and battle, hear with swelling hearts the acclamations of the people. He glories in the success of his great Captain and is proud to follow him.

There is something pathetic in Paul's partiality for martial figures. He longs to be a soldier; yet there is not a recruiting officer in the Roman army that would enroll him. For, by his own confession, he was of "mean presence." There is reason to believe that he was weak-eyed, of small stature and probably hump-backed; yet this little Jew,—this blinking, limping scholar, who could scarcely have held his own with an "awkward squad," or aimed an arrow straight—would be a soldier! He writes to a young friend at Ephesus exhorting him to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, to "endure hardness," to fight the good fight of faith, to put on the whole armor, helmet, breastplate and sandals, that he may be able to stand and withstand in the evil day. This martial spirit runs through all his epistles; the flash of conquest is ever in his eyes.

And Paul was a soldier; never a better nor a braver than he! In perils oft, on stormy seas and over burning deserts, upward along the rugged steeps of Macedonia and through the fastnesses of Syria he bore the red banner of the cross. He gloried in danger and exposure. He wore himself out in the long, fierce conflict; and, dying at last, a prisoner in chains, he exulting cried, "I have fought a good fight! Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me in that day."

It is quite the fashion, nowadays, to cry down this martial aspect of the Christian life. Our Sunday-schools must no longer sing, "I'm glad I'm in this army." Doubt is expressed as to the propriety of such inspiring hymns as "Onward Christian soldiers." But did not Christ say, "I am not come to bring peace into the world, but a sword"? Are we not exhorted to go forth, under the Captain of our salvation, to destroy the strongholds of evil? Aye; an earnest life is an unceasing campaign against the forces that make for error and unrighteousness, "the world and the flesh and the devil."

A man in the ranks of the conquering army, which is to achieve an ultimate peace by conquest in this Holy War, finds himself at his best; at his best, because at his bravest and manliest. Here is the glory of earthly life, to have part in the campaign of Emmanuel, to disencumber one's self of lower things in order to lend a hand in the conquest of the world; to sit after a while with those who shall gather around the campfires of heaven, and show "the marks of the Lord Jesus," honorable scars received in his service. The highest place in heaven is reserved for him who "overcometh" in this strife against the forces of evil. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit together with me in my throne." —"To him that overcometh will I give a white stone with a new name written therein, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it."

But the figure changes, and Paul is seen no longer as a Soldier, but as a Prisoner led about in chains to grace the triumph of his Lord. This is his "missionary itinerary," of which we hear so much. He is paraded

up and down as "an ensample" of the prowess of his Conqueror (I. Tim. 1, 15, 16). If a man may not be a soldier in the victorious ranks, let this suffice him, to be like Paul "a gazingstock" (Heb. 10, 33). He sees himself exposed to the scorn of the multitude, his proud will subdued, his heart broken by sovereign grace. Ashamed? Hear him: "I, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord!" Nay, rather, he glories in his humiliation for Jesus' sake. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation."

The conversion of Paul was to his mind a complete subjugation. There is a world of meaning in that word—"passing under the yoke." This is in pursuance of the Master's injunction, "Take my yoke upon you." At the moment when, as in a sunburst, the apostle perceived the real character of Christ, he cried out, "What wilt thou have me to do?" He threw himself before his Conqueror's feet and, with himself, surrendered all; his noble birth, his splendid culture, his magnificent prospects, all were yielded up without reserve or condition when he passed under his new Master's yoke. It is always so with a truly converted man; he sees himself as no longer his own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The subsequent life of Paul was thraldom. He calls himself *doulos*, a bondslave. He writes, "The love of Christ constraineth" me (II. Cor. 5, 14). The throne had been abdicated by self and Christ had taken it. What now would his Master have him do? Where would he have him go? What would

he have him say or suffer? These were the questions that dominated his being. He sought to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

And yet Paul insists that he is free. In passing under the yoke of Jesus he has entered into "the glorious liberty of the children of God." How is this? "He is the freeman whom the truth makes free." Or it might be written equally well, He is the free man whom the law makes free. For freedom is found only in the abandon of joyous obedience to perfect law. Let us make no mistake as to this matter of freedom, in whose holy name, as Madame Roland said, "so many grievous wrongs are committed." A comet whizzing through space, without rein or orbit, plunging into the depths of infinite darkness at its own sweet will, is not free; but once let it enter the province of the solar system and fall under the control of gravitation; and straightway of necessity it finds an orbit; and thenceforth, delivered from chaos and under the behest of cosmos, it pursues its way, obedient yet ever free. So a man swept by passion is at his worst; he finds himself, only when he discovers the law of his being and enters into a cordial compliance with it; and this brings him, as a captive, into the train of the triumphant Son of Man.

Again the figure changes, and Paul sees himself an incense bearer in the retinue of the Conqueror. As an apostle, declaring the unsearchable riches of the gospel, he cries, "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." Paul is ever jealous of his apostleship; "the least of the apostles," indeed, "as one born out of due

season," yet ever ready to vindicate his prerogative. "I, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ!" To this altitude of honor he ascends by three successive steps.

First: He was "chosen from the foundation of the world." So indeed is every one who follows Christ. Nor does this eternal choice affect the sovereignty of the individual will. You who are worshiping in this sanctuary will presently pass out through one of those three doors. It is obvious that God must have foreknown which of them you will take; yet there is not one who does not know to a certainty that he is quite free to pass through whichever door he will. In other words, the alleged contradiction between foreordination and the freedom of the will is purely fictitious. The solution of the difficulty is one of plain common sense. Paul had been chosen to a place in the cortege of Jesus, yet it none the less devolved upon him to assume it.

Second: He was "called." The time came when a voice spoke to him out of heaven, "Saul! Saul!" So in universal experience, there is a supreme moment when the alluring voices of truth and righteousness seem all converged in one; a voice that calls us by name, saying, "Rise up and follow me!" And on that moment pivot the eternal issues of life and death.

Third: Paul was "separated" to his apostolic office. I think the time of this separation was when he sojourned in a certain "house in the street called Straight"; where, being blind for a season, he saw visions which had never come to his open eyes. Then Ananias laid his hand upon him saying, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee

in the way as thou camest, hast sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." This was his setting apart from the world to missionary service. And "he rose forthwith and was baptized," and set forth upon his Master's work. He understood that, henceforth, his back was upon the world and his face toward the kingdom and triumph of Christ. He was separated to declare the gospel to the Gentiles; yet not more separated than every Christian. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the saviour of his knowledge in every place!" We are all incense burners, setting forth his praises in the gospel of life.

But the apostle is here moved by a most solemn consideration; to wit, the incense which rises from his censer is to some a savor of life unto life, but to others of death unto death. It was thus in the procession of the pagan conqueror. The air was heavy with a perfume of frankincense as he rode onward to the Capitoline Hill. To the captives who followed in his train that perfume was as bitter as myrrh; for they were approaching their doom; to the galleys, to the rock-hewn dungeons, to the sacrificial altar. But to others that perfume was inexpressibly sweet; for they were passing on to praise and promotion. To these it meant home, triumph, the plaudits of the multitude. Thus the gospel which we preach means death or life. "And who is sufficient unto these things?" Yet must we swing the censer: for though no man who hears the gospel can be again precisely the same man, but either better or worse for hearing it; yet the sorrow is an

ever vanishing one, like night fleeing at the approach of dawn. For in the passing years, the number of those who reject the gospel to their own destruction grows less and less, while ever more and more "prisoners of hope" are taken, and the song of salvation grows louder, and will, until the glory of our Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Thanks be to God, therefore, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us! O the high privilege of marching in the ranks of our triumphant Lord! What are the honors of the earth to this? How it exalts the humblest life! The Captain of our salvation is moving grandly on to the subjugation of the world. To march with him as Soldier, Prisoner if need be, or Incense-burner, this is to fulfil our high destiny.

Let us close our eyes for a moment and stop our ears to the confused noises of the world. The trumpets blare in heaven; the King draws nigh! Angels and archangels wheel into line. Earth sends up its shout of victory. Hail to the King! Let angels prostrate fall! O glory unspeakable to have a place in the triumphant host! This is the honor of a man.

We open our eyes again and, lo, the world is about us. Here are men and women groping among the baubles that lie scattered along their path. There is a cry for help on every hand, and few to heed it. There are hands uplifted and souls pleading, "Come over and help us"; and few to regard them. *Sursum corda!* Up with your hearts, men and women of Christ! The clouds of incense rise. Thanks be to God for the privilege of serving him, in doing good as we have opportunity unto all men.

Our Master speaks: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me; For he that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my name's sake and the gospel's shall find it." Let us misuse no gift, waste no privilege, squander no opportunity. The hands sweep around the dial. Give, pray, preach the evangel, unsheath the sword, swing the censers, forget self, honor the King. So shall each of us attain unto the full stature of a man; for the chief end of man is not self-pleasing, but to glorify God.

THE INIMITABLE CHRIST

"Tarry ye here and watch."—Mark 14, 34.
"Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder."—Matt. 25, 36.
"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed."—Luke 22, 41.

In every well-furnished library there is a copy of the "De Imitatione Christi," by Thomas á Kempis. He was a priest in the convent of Mount Saint Agnes; a mystic, a dreamer of dreams and seer of visions. He lived in troublesome times. The Reformation was beginning to turn the world upside down. The mind and conscience of the people were in revolt against ecclesiastical tyranny. France and England stood at sword's points. Two Popes, at Rome and Avignon, were anathematizing each other like fish-wives. Great problems were being broached in Church Councils. The Inquisition was getting under way; swords were flashing; fagot fires were kindling. But Thomas á Kempis cared nothing for these things. The placid, blue-eyed old man was illuminating missals in the cloister and writing "The Imitation of Christ." His book has been translated into more languages than any other except the Bible, and has had an inestimable influence over the minds of men.

The importance of imitating Christ cannot be emphasized too deeply; but it may be misapprehended.

There is an imitable and also an inimitable Christ. Up to a certain point we may approach him in affectionate fellowship, but beyond that we must needs stand still and adore. Draw near! Draw near—but not too near!

I. *A difficulty presents itself in connection with his singular Personality.* He was and is *Theanthropos;* that is, God and Man, knit together. As such he stands alone and singular. There is no other in the universe like him.

On his human side he cannot be approached too near. A woman who was a sinner came to him once, as he sat at meat, and, breaking an alabaster box of precious ointment, anointed his feet. His disciples exchanged glances of disapproval, but he said, "Let her alone; she hath wrought a good work on me." The time came, however, when Mary of Magdala would have embraced his feet and he forbade her, saying, "Touch me not!" Something had happened in the meantime, which had placed a profound emphasis on his Godhood; in view of which her gratitude must be commingled with the utmost self-abasement and reverent adoration. It behooves us to give attention to this fact; because in our time the affectionate type of piety is much in vogue. Not that I would disturb the comfort of those who find in Jesus their dearest Friend; but the divine factor must not be left out. Jesus is ever, on his Godward side, at an infinite remove from us. He calls us near, as he invited Thomas to thrust his finger into the print of the nails; yet in the very front of his infinite kindness we withdraw our hands and drop our eyes, dazzled

by the effulgence of his glory, crying, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

II. *As to the teaching of Christ; how far may we imitate it?* Let it be observed that his method of instruction was as unique as his personality. It is written, "He taught not as the scribes—that is, by reference to tradition and precedent — but with authority." The word is *exousia*, meaning literally, "from within." In other words he drew from an inward and inexhaustible source of truth. His word was "Yea" and "Amen," and "Verily, verily, I say unto you!" It is apparent that, at this point, he parts company with us.

In our teaching of spiritual things there are two possible extremes. One is a certain vagueness or ambiguity, much prevalent in these days. And of this the world is weary. It has had enough of hypotheses; it wants positive propositions. A man is competent to do his own guessing; why should he have spiritual teachers to guess for him? And "if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" The people are saying "Tell us what you know; spare us your ifs and perhapses and peradventures. We face eternity: can you tell us aught about it?"

The other extreme is dogmatism. And no man can safely dogmatize in these days. That which was sublimely impressive in Christ becomes grotesque in any other. Yet here and there one may be found who answers to the description of Hudibras:

> "For he was of that stubborn crew,
> Of errant saints, whom all men know
> To be the true Church militant:

> Such as do built their faith upon
> The holy text of pike and drum,
> Decide all controversies by
> Infallible artillery,
> And prove the doctrine orthodox
> By Apostolic blows and knocks."

The true gospeler, however, speaks with positiveness by leaning on the authority of Christ. He does not say, "I say unto you"; but, "Thus saith my Lord." He cannot allow that there is any uncertainty as to the things taught by Jesus Christ. To him the testimony of his Lord is ultimate; he has no disposition to get beyond or behind it. He offers no doctrine of his own. He occupies the position of a "paying teller" for his Lord, giving out truths that bear the image and superscription of the King. To assume authority of his own in these premises would be to utter spurious coin. But with the understanding that the infallible Christ stands sponsor for his utterance he may speak with absolute positiveness, saying, "This is true, because it is written in the word," or, "This is true, because my Master has said it."

III. *As to his Wonderful Works: these also were singular and, in so far as they were miraculous, inimitable.* He wrought these wonders in his own name and by his own power. He did not even appeal to the Father, but said to the stormy waves, "Be still!" and they obeyed him: to the dead, "Come forth!" and the King of Terrors acknowledged his sovereignty. The source of this power was within him.

The apostles were endued with *charismata* or spiritual gifts, by which they also were enabled to

work miracles. These were necessary in the formative period of the church. Let it be observed, however, that the apostles, even with this peculiar endowment, did not undertake to work miracles by any indwelling power but only in Jesus' name. As Peter and John were passing through the Gate Beautiful they said to the cripple, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!" And when they were called to account by the Jewish elders, in the Sanhedrin, on the following day their words were, "If we this day be examined of the good thing done to the impotent man, be it known unto you all, and unto all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."

It is an open question whether or no miracles are wrought in our time. There is indeed no lack of "testimonials." A physician of prominence recently said to me, "There is not a charlatan in New York who cannot show better credentials than mine. There is not an herb-doctor, clairvoyant or Christian Scientist who cannot produce a larger array of crutches and bandages, in demonstration of his healing power, than the most distinguished practitioner of the legitimate schools." How shall we account for this? The wrist-bone of Saint Ann is in evidence. The fountain shrine of Lourdes is a museum of the trophies of mystical therapeutics. But let this pass; I have no disposition to investigate here and now the authenticity of such marvellous works. I merely say that in no case are they to be classed with the miracles of Christ who

wrought by virtue of the omnipotency which dwelt within him.

One miracle, however, is possible to the humblest of the followers of Christ; to wit, Conversion. And this is most important and stupendous of all. To open blind eyes or heal sickness, to prolong life for an handbreadth at best, is an insignificant matter in comparison with the bringing of a soul out of darkness and the shadow of death into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. I say this is possible to every follower of Christ; as it is written, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." Yet this miracle is not of ourselves. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Of ourselves we can do nothing. At best we only bring the soul into the presence and under the saving grace of Jesus. It is recorded that when he came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, with the glory yet lingering on his face, he found a demoniac boy, writhing and foaming at his lips. The disciples were there, but they could not heal him; and their enemies stood by deriding them. "O ye of little faith!" he cried, "How long shall I bear with you?" And then, "Bring him to me!" And they brought the boy to Jesus who straightway healed him. Pass it along the line, "Bring them to Jesus!" In any case of either physical or spiritual infirmity this is the utmost we can do. No man can save his fellow from the power of sin. "*Absolvo te*"? Aye; any follower of Christ can say, "Absolvo te," providing he will reverently add, "*in nomine Jesu*"; for Christ alone hath power

on earth to forgive sin. We have the power of the keys, indeed, but Christ is the door; our part is to open the door that souls may enter in.

IV. *We come now to the Character of Jesus: and here also he is infinitely removed from us.* He was in all points such as we are only without sin. *Only* without sin? O, mighty stone's cast! What a gulf of separation is opened in those words! He stands by himself saying, "Who layeth anything to my charge?" It should indeed be our constant endeavor to follow him; but, however we may follow, we shall never, until death breaks the last fetter of sin, catch up with him.

I know there are people who claim to be perfect; but their own friends and neighbors rise up to witness against them. And God's word is their accuser; for it is written, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

But we may not therefore lose heart or courage. The arrow aimed at the heavens may not pierce them; but it will surely go further than if directed at a lower mark. The students of art who in our galleries sit before the masterpieces of Rubens and Murillo laboriously copying them, are stimulated by their very shortcomings. So Paul said, "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And again, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Fin-

isher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

All true character is righteousness; and all righteousness is light; and the one central source of light is the sun. Our Lord is the Sun of Righteousness; as he said, "I am the light of the world." But he also said, concerning us, "Ye are the light of the world"; that is, we are planetary souls, borrowing from him as we revolve about him. The moon says, "If I cannot be a sun, I can turn my face toward the sun and partake of its radiance; and I can look downward on the earth, to illuminate the paths of such as travel through the night." And this marks our nearest approach to the righteousness of Christ. "Ye are the light of the world; let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify God."

V. *Now as to the Death of Christ: there was never another like it.* Of all the martyrs who, in devotion to truth and the welfare of their fellow men, have faced the sword and blazing fagots, not one has ever died like him. The distinguishing feature of his death was its vicariousness; He took the place of sinners before the offended Law. He bared his heart to the shaft that was intended for them. "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; and by his stripes we are healed."

As he entered the Garden of Gethsemane he said to his disciples, "Tarry ye here while I go yonder." The time of this great sacrifice was at hand and the shadow of the cross was over him. There was that to be done which he alone could do; as it was writ-

ten "He hath trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with him." His disciples paused, therefore, in the verge of the deep shadows while he "was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast." O what a stone's cast was this! What a distance between him and them! The cup which he placed to his lips, purple with vicarious death, was only for him. We may indeed die for others, but not as Jesus did. Let us hearken to the cry of David as he staggers up the stairway to his chamber on the housetop, mourning for his wayward son; "O Absalom, my son, my son, would God that I had died for thee!" But dying for Absalom would not have saved him. There are multitudes of fathers and mothers who, for their prodigal children, would cheerfully lay down their lives. But, alas! in that sacrifice there would be no expiatory power. Jesus alone makes atonement for sin.

Yet it is possible for the followers of Christ to enter into the fellowship of his suffering. Indeed they are required to do this. We are to be "crucified with Christ." Paul said, "I die daily for Jesus' sake." If we may not enter the deepest shadow of Gethsemane to drink of the cup of vicarious pain which had been prepared for this Son of God, we may at least "tarry and watch with him." Sympathy is possible. We may sympathize with his passion for the souls of men, and with the passion of men in their need of him. Aye, tarry ye here and watch! Can ye not watch with him?

An old legend tells of a ring which, lying on the ground, looked as if a child might lift it; but whoever undertook to lift it found that it was not an isolated

ring, but a link of an endless chain which girdled the earth. Such is the passion of Christ. It moves us to reverent wonder and profoundest sympathy; but, O, it is infinitely, divinely beyond us.

Nevertheless, here is the preëminent glory of our humanity; that we may come thus far; that we may tarry in the verge of the shadows and watch with Christ. We are not asked to do more than is possible. But in this approach to Jesus, in this sympathy with his expiatory suffering, we become laborers together with God.

We return now, in closing, to the thought that Christ is "the only-begotten Son of God." Only-begotten! There is a world of meaning there. We too are sons of God. We are doubly sons, by creation and by adoption. But there is one who is God's Son by eternal generation; and therein he is at an infinite "stone's cast" from us. We shall never, in all the æons of eternity, have share with him in that divine prerogative. But, in our filial relation with him as "the first born among many brethren," we shall come nearer and nearer forever and ever: as it is written, "Now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

COMMON SENSE IN RELIGION

"Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."—Mark 10, 15.

A good definition of common sense is "the faculty of first principles." It is also defined to be "plain wisdom, such as is the common heritage of men." It would thus appear that our Lord's reference of religious propositions to the arbitrament of the simple, unaffected mind of childhood was distinctly philosophic.

A writer on "The Child as a Thinker," in a recent periodical, pertinently asks: "*Are we doing an absurd thing when we try to teach our children to be logical? Are they not in many respects more logical than we? In other words, is not the logical faculty innate and not acquired? Any one,*" he continues, "*who chooses to observe the development of a child's mind, will, if he does not suppress its natural bent, convince himself that a child from three to five years of age possesses thinking powers of greater capacity than we are in the habit of crediting to it. One of the external evidences of a thoughtful mind is the asking of questions which bear definite and logical relations to each other; and this is precisely what an average child of that age, when talking to a person in sympathy with it, is persistently doing. It is not content with a flimsy ana evasive answer, and how strong is its intellectual craving is manifested by its evident disappointment or display of temper when its ignorant parents impatiently curb its curiosity. ——My impression, derived from observation and from conversation with observant persons, is that the average child, if not suppressed, is capable of a quality of thinking that leads*

its elders, when they try to follow it, into an intellectual quagmire of inconsistency and absurdity from which they beat an inglorious retreat by angrily bidding it 'not to ask silly questions.'"

But the common sense, or native practical intelligence, which is ours in childhood, becomes in the process of what we call education, a constantly diminishing factor in the business of life. As we sharpen our faculties and furbish them in the process of culture we lose, more and more, the power to grasp intuitively a fundamental fact. In our effort to acquire the art of dialectics we become sophists, moving further and further away from the simplicity of faith, by which alone we are able to apprehend spiritual things. This is expressed in Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality," as follows:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us—our life's star—
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy;
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows;
He sees it in his joy!
The youth who daily farther from the East
Must travel, still is nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended.
At length the man perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common day."

Our text sets forth clearly the differentiation of Christianity from all other religions. It is adjusted to the mind of the average man: as Christ said on one occasion, "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes." Paul writes, in like manner, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Over the doorway of Plato's Academy was this inscription, "Let no one who has not mastered geometry presume to enter here." Let us set over against that legend the picture of Christ with a child upon his knee, saying, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as this little child, he shall not enter therein." In other words the child, as representing that "plain wisdom which is the heritage of men," in distinction from the intellectual acumen and self-sufficiency which are produced in the processes of education, is made the arbiter in spiritual things. The justice of this proposition will appear from a brief survey of the rudimental facts which center in God.

God himself, the central truth of all, is apprehended by faith; as it is written, "The world by wisdom knew not God." In our Theological Seminaries there are certain stock arguments for the Divine being, known as Ontological, Cosmological and Teleological. The ontological argument affirms God from the fact that the conception of his being

is within us; the cosmological from the existence of law and order in the world around us; the teleological from final causes.

Now putting away all elaborate terminology, let us submit these methods to the child. We shall at once discover that, while we are arguing from the shadowy conception to the substance, he has intuitively apprehended the fact itself; so that until we, by our argumentation, suggested the question, he never doubted God. Or when we place a grain of sand under the microscope and discourse of the wonderful law of crystallization as proving a great Lawgiver and Executive, he interrupts us with the eloquent question, "Who made it?" Or when we endeavor to elaborate the argument from design, he anticipates our conclusion by simple faith; as did the Arab, who, on being asked as he sat in the doorway of his tent, how he knew that a camel had passed by during the night, merely pointed to its footprints in the sand. Now this is common sense; that is, the method of common sense, or native, practical intelligence. You may call it Faith, if you prefer; but, in any case, it seems to be conclusive as to the existence of God.

And along with the Doctrine of God goes that of Immortality: "If a man die, will he live again?" This question is being discussed from many standpoints, just now. There are those who believe that we are on the verge of scientific demonstration, as the result of psychic experiments. But the uncorrupted mind of the race, or of the average man, does not waver. On a March day I rowed over to "Crane Island" in Lake Minnetonka and found it deserted. Pointing to the empty nests in the trees,

I said to a lad beside me, "The cranes and cormorants are all gone."—"Yes," he answered, "but they'll be coming back next month." Had he been thoroughly trained in the method of the schools he might have entered on an elaborate discussion of the migratory habits of crane and cormorant, or might, perhaps, have suggested a doubt as to whether the homing law of their nature might not fail of fulfilment in this particular case. But in the simplicity of common sense he merely assumed the normal procedure. Had he been standing by the side of his dead mother, he would doubtless have reasoned in the same way. The thought of extinction would not have occurred to him; he would simply have said, "Mother has gone away." And this is the truth which the intuitive wisdom of the race has inscribed on its tombstones from time immemorial; *Emigravit*, that is, "departed to another land."

So with the Doctrine of Sin. The medium through which the conviction of sin is divinely communicated to man is conscience. It is called "the moral sense," but it might with equal pertinency be called the common sense. It speaks in childhood with an inerrant voice. We all remember how in our early years, after a day of ill-doing, we lay sleepless, affrighted, drawing the coverlet over our heads. But, in the passing years, the clear sight of conscience has been dulled until, perhaps, habituating ourselves to sin, we have come to be practically unconscious of it. In other words, conscience has been "seared as with an hot iron." We may talk more learnedly of the fact of moral obliquity and its phenomena, but practically we know less about it.

And along with the vanishing fact of sin goes its frightful corollary, Retribution. Are we not advised that hell is no longer preached or believed in? Nevertheless, the generic consciousness remains and finds expression not only in the Scriptures, as in the simple mind of childhood, but in the universal legends of the race. I remember that Henry Ward Beecher in one of his sermons exclaimed, "The Liberals tell us that they have filled hell up. O would that it were possible!" No scholasticism can controvert the innate and universal sense of justice. The thought of retribution can not perish from the earth until the simple tales of Ixion on the Wheel, and Tantalus consumed with thirst, and Prometheus chained to the rock with the vulture gnawing at his vitals, and the Furies pursuing the ill-doer on wool-shod feet, and other presentations of retributive justice set forth in the false religions and mythologies, have been blotted out. In this consensus of human opinion we hear the voice of that "plain wisdom which is the common heritage of men."

The voice of common sense is heard, also, in current discussions as to the trustworthiness of Holy Writ. A child in his simplicity will reason on this wise: *First*, We need a revelation of truth to guide us amid the dangers and vicissitudes of life: *Second*, if there be anywhere in the universe a God who regards us as his children, he would not leave us to distress and perplexity but would respond to that need: *Third*, there should be, therefore, among the many books which lay claim to divine authority, one worthy to be received as an infallible rule of faith and practice:

Fourth, if the Bible truthfully meets the necessities of the human soul, it is worthy to be received in that way. And the conclusion is expressed in the words of Coleridge who, despite all his wanderings into forbidden paths, felt the beating of the divine heart in the Scriptures and cried, "It finds me!" This, I say, is better than any amount of expert testimony. It is the voice of the uncorrupted sense of need and rightness in the universal mind of man.

And then as to the Atonement. O what labyrinths of argumentation have been constructed about this simple truth! "Is it to be supposed that God would lay the scourge upon his only begotten Son?" And, "Can the innocent suffer for the guilty?" And, "Is there any expiatory value in suffering and death?" Ask the child again; for, indeed, the whole argument is solved by the intuition of love. Will a mother suffer for her child? Will she sympathize with the child of her bosom in its pain? And what is the vicarious pain of Jesus but the sympathy of God—who is both father and mother of the race—with his prodigal children? Ask the child to look toward Calvary: say to him, "God so loved the world"; and he will answer in his simplicity, "It is what we should expect of God; it is just like God!"

> Tell me the story simply, as to a little child,
> For I am weak and weary, and helpless and defiled.
> Tell me the story often, for I forget so soon!
> The early dew of morning has passed away at noon.

And finally as to the vital doctrine of Justification by Faith, which completes the credal circle of our religion. It is easy to propound such questions as,

"If Christ died for all, then what need of believing in him?" or, "What saving virtue can reside in faith?" Again let the simplicity of childhood instruct us. We pass into the moving camp of Israel and find the manna lying plenteous as hoar frost around us. "What is this?" It is a child that answers, "This is bread for hungry people; gather it up and eat it." We pass on to Rephidim where the water gushes from the rock. "What is this?" And the child answers again, "This is water for the thirsty; dip it up and drink it." Now the faith that justifies is simply an appropriation of the benefits of the gospel of Christ. While we are arguing about its rationale, the wisdom of simplicity has advised us that if we are to be saved by the atonement of Jesus we must believe in him. Manna on the ground satisfies no hunger. Christ on his cross saves no soul. It is Christ received by faith who delivers us from sin. This is common sense; and wise men will act upon it.

Let us get back, therefore, from the artificial refinements of wisdom to the simplicity of common sense. If we will not, what then? The Master speaks, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Much of our education is like arboriculture in Japan. An oak tree is taken from its place on the hill top, where, buffeting the storms, it fastens its roots upon the everlasting rocks and lifts its arms triumphant in the air; and it is reduced by elaborate culture to the dimensions of a flower pot. In like manner as to our attitude toward the great spiritual facts, we move further and further, by a process of mental

dwarfing, from the clear and simple light which is our natural heritage, into a narrow and hidebound scholasticism, which makes us unconsciously averse to truth. It was thus with Nicodemus, to whom Christ presented facts which should have commended themselves to him at once: but he was a rabbi educated in the hair-splitting schools of philosophy, and he must needs cry, "How can these things be?"

It has pleased God, for the relief of such as have wandered, to grant the influence of his Holy Spirit, of whom it is written, "He will lead you into all truth." If we yield to his influence, we shall find ourselves returning to the light. Not even common sense, that is to say, the universal instinct of the race with reference to spiritual things, is adequate for perfect guidance to those who by habitual wrong-thinking have been diverted from the simple paths of truth. But common sense *plus* the illumination of the divine Spirit affords all necessary help: "The light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world" is as a lantern in our hands; we may pursue our way along the dangerous ways of life, discussing the qualities of caloric and the actinic rays, and stumble over into spiritual death. But if we are willing to walk in the guidance of that divinely given light, we shall find it shining ever on our path and growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

THIS IS THE VICTORY.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and *this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*"—I. John 5, 1-4.

A well known picture of Napoleon represents him standing with General Bertrand on the high shore of St. Helena, gazing off with melancholy eyes toward France. He had planned to conquer the world, and his great ambition had fallen like a house of cards. "Alone and chained upon this rock," said he to Bertrand, "I have none to fight or conquer for me. Who are my courtiers in misfortune? My life once shone with all the brilliance of a diadem, but disaster came and the fine gold is dimmed. Such is my melancholy fate; the name of a conqueror is become a theme for schoolboys."

A like picture, relieved of its most melancholy features, is that of John the Evangelist on his lonely island. An imprisoned Son of Thunder, pastor emeritus of the Ephesian church, a worn out veteran yet eager for the fray, he climbs the heights of Patmos and gazes eastward. He knows that his people, a feeble folk like the conies, keeping the faith far

yonder in the shadow of Diana's Temple, are suffering for the truth's sake, and, alas! he has neither part nor lot with them. Not more fiercely beats the sea against its rocky shores, nor more vainly, than his old heart against the fate that holds him thus "cabined, cribb'd, confined." He sees the worshipers of great Diana entering their magnificent temple with pomp and circumstance, and knows how sorely tempted are those few and feeble Christians to win safety and curry favor by falling in with the multitude; and over the Ægean he sends his admonition, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols!" He hears the confused sounds of controversy as they meet their pagan adversaries and false teachers who strive to seduce them from the simplicity of their faith; and over the sea he sends his counsel, "Try the spirits whether they are of God! For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; this is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not your reward!" To this solicitous pastor the angry roar of the billows suggests the beasts of Ephesus; and in the fierce lightning he sees the sword unsheathed against his unshepherded flock: and his voice rings loud and clear, "Be true to your faith! Be loyal to your convictions! This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith!"

The ministers of New York are praying for a revival. In "retreats" and conferences they are pleading for an outpouring of the Spirit of God. We do, indeed, need a revival; but not one that shall express itself in emotion and excitement or expend itself in hosannas and hallelujahs. We need above all

things a revival of faith; a revival of loyalty to God's holy Word; a revival of calm confidence in the great verities of the Gospel. When faith is eclipsed the dry and thirsty land gapes in vain for the early and the latter rains. "All things are possible to him that believeth." O for a quickening of desire for truth! For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

I. *The text suggests a Conflict.* It is the conflict of two worlds for the soul of a man.

One of these is the world here and now. In scripture parlance it stands for all those influences which oppose our higher hopes and aspirations; making us sordid, selfish, narrow-minded denizens of time and lovers of Vanity Fair. This is the world of which Carlyle said, "Understand it, despise it, loathe it; but cheerfully hold on thy way through it with thine eye on the highest loadstars." This is the world of which Horace Walpole wrote, "It is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel." This is the world of which Wordsworth wrote:

> "The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."

And this is the world of which Jesus said, in his sacerdotal prayer for his disciples, "The world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

It lies so close against us, that we may ever hear the pulsing of its great, sordid heart. Its music and dancing, the noises of its marketplace, the shouting of those who strive for its mastery, shut out

visions of glory, the music of the spheres and the hosannas of the sons of God. It strives ever to charm, to enthrall, to win us. Our constant temptation is to fall in with its devotees, who, "forever hastening to the grave, stoop downward as they run."

The other world is that which lies beyond, and which endureth forever and ever. For that we were destined in the ordinance of nature, being created in the likeness and after the image of God. The world here and now is nothing; that beyond is everything. Here is the ratio: time is to eternity, as a drop of water is to the unfathomable deeps. The world here and now is to the world beyond as a mote flying in a sunbeam is to the sum total of the material worlds of the universe.

Out of this conflict comes the problem, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his eternal life?" My soul is the gage of battle; for it the two worlds contend. Which shall have it?

> My soul, be on thy guard;
> Ten thousand foes arise,
> And hosts of sin are pressing hard,
> To draw thee from the skies!

There is no discharge in this war. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your

feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." For this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.

II. *The faith here referred to as the determining factor in the soul's conflict, is of a very definite sort.* The Apostle explains what he means by it: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and who is this that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

It is, at the outset, to believe in God. Not in Law, Energy or a "Something not ourselves that maketh for righteousness;" but in One who sitteth upon a throne, high and lifted up, heaven for his throne and earth for his footstool, ruling over the destinies of nations and the children of men. It is to believe in a personal, immanent God, who at every moment is nearer than touching or seeing, who knoweth the secret imaginations of the heart.

We say in the historic Creed of the centuries, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." But, if the tremendous import of that manifesto were to get vital hold on our hearts and consciences, what manner of men and women we should be! How all mean ambitions would dwindle! How insignificant would seem the passing show!

Here is the solace of life and the strength of character: "I will look unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." This was Luther's rock of refuge in the dark days of the Reformation: "Come, Philip," said he to his friend Melancthon, "let us sing the Forty-sixth Psalm: 'God is our refuge and

strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.'"

But the faith here indicated goes further; it takes hold on God *as manifest in Jesus Christ*—the Christ who came from heaven to earth for us men and our salvation; who took upon himself the nature, not of angels, but of men, being made in all points as we are, only without sin, that he might be "an High priest able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities"; who climbed the rugged slopes of Calvary, bearing the burden of the world's sin until, in the deep darkness, his heart broke under it; who ascended into heaven to reassume "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," and there ever liveth to make intercession for us; who in his last farewell gave to his disciples and to us an exceeding great and precious promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

He who by faith has thus apprehended God, is delivered from all fear of defeat in life's conflict. "This is the victory." He has ever with him an omnipotent Helper, whose white plume, like that of Henry of Navarre, "waves ever where the battle is fiercest."

It is thus that a man gains self-confidence; saying "Of mine own self I can do nothing; but I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!" He confronts the world with the cry of the Roundheads, "God with us!" He lifts his voice in the challenge of the great Apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again and ever maketh intercession for us." This is the victory that overcometh the world.

III. *The victory here noted is over all the influences that oppose our progress heavenward.* The four salient points of conflict are Sin, Unbelief, Circumstance and Death; and faith is the victory that overcomes them all.

It is customary in our time to minimize Sin; as a misdemeanor to be adequately punished with a ten days' sentence. In some quarters there is a disposition to eliminate hell from the divine economy, as if it were an excessive penalty; and to substitute for the divine justice a readiness to confer universal amnesty, even on the most obdurate rebels against the divine administration. This is due to an entire misapprehension of the character of God. The age needs a new vision of the High and Holy One. O that the heavens were opened that we might behold him, seated upon his throne, angels and archangels veiling their faces before him and crying, "Holy! holy! holy!" The stars themselves are not clean before him. He hates sin, loathes it, abhors it, cannot look upon it with any degree of allowance, can by no means overlook it. He who thus beholds God, must regard sin as he regards it, must hate and abhor and renounce it. He must, of necessity, when tempted, brace himself against his faith and cry, with the white solar ray of holiness shining in his eyes, "No! Am I a dog that I should do this thing, and offend against God?"

And by the power of faith, a living faith in God

as he hath made himself manifest in Christ, we overcome Unbelief, also. We are living in an age of denial. All the great fundamental facts of the Christian religion are here and there contradicted, openly and without compunction. Time was when such assaults were from without, but the sorrow of the situation to-day is that the enemy is within the gates! Thus it was prophesied, "Deceivers shall come among you in the last days." We are asked to accept only such facts as can be established by scientific proof. "Science" is the shibboleth of our time: and God forbid that aught be spoken against the legitimate results of scientific investigation. But science has to do with such facts as lie within the province of the physical senses. It pauses at the circumscription of the finger tips and says, "Beyond this, I know not!"

What, then, of the great, illimitable world of truth which lies beyond? For "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal?" God, immortality, inspiration, the incarnation and the atonement are scientifically undemonstrable. Shall we be wise everywhere else and agnostics here? Shall we be content to live in the low valley of the five physical senses, with no desire to scale the mountains and look into the world beyond? Nay; there is a sixth sense by which a man, made in God's likeness, takes hold on invisible and eternal things, and, as Kepler said, "thinks God's thoughts after him." He who refuses to exercise this sixth sense is unworthy of his divine birth and destiny. It is no more reasonable to insist on apprehending spiritual truth by the physical senses

than it would be to insist upon hearing with the eyes or seeing with the ears. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The man who refuses to believe beyond what he can see with fleshly eyes and touch with his fingers, must not be surprised if the great verities slip from him. He must give up Christ himself, "whom not having seen we love, and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The philosophy of the world is agnostic ; but this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. It enables us to see things which are otherwise invisible ; and brings life and immortality to light.

And by faith in the God who has revealed himself in Christ, we rise superior to the outward Circumstances of life. It is sometimes said that man is a creature of circumstance. This is true only when he will have it so. The mark of real greatness is to rise above circumstance and prove one's self superior to environment. The ideal man comes always out of Nazareth, by heroic conquest of the world around him.

How shall we meet adversity? With stoic indifference, like the Indian bound to the stake, clenching his teeth and saying, "What can't be cured must be endured"? Or by the passive submission of the minimum Christian, whose sole comfort is to murmur: "It is the Lord; let him do whatsoever he will"? Behold, I show unto you a better way: "If I must needs glory, I will glory in tribulation! For when I am weak then am I strong, since the power of Christ resteth upon me." Here is the conquest of faith :

God knoweth what is best ; and maketh all things work together for good to them that love him.

But hard as it is to meet adversity, to meet prosperity is harder. O poor sybarites ! O poor principalities and powers ! O wretched denizens of this world, blind to visions of life and immortality ! O rich fool ! He sat in his counting-house saying, "What shall I do ? My harvests are so great that I have nowhere to store them. This will I do ; I will tear down my barns and build greater ; and I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many days ; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry !'" Then spake the voice of One of whom he had taken no note; "Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be?" Alas for the man who, in his prosperity, leaves God out of the reckoning ! Here is the problem : How to be rich, yet righteous? and faith alone can solve it. To believe in God, and in ourselves as God's stewards ; this is to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, to get the better of the world's blandishments, and to win an inheritance in the endless hereafter. A man is safe, rich or poor, in sickness or in health, caressed or buffeted, only when he believes in God.

And the last enemy which shall be destroyed is Death. How many a Christian have I seen pass through the Valley of the Shadow, leaning on faith as on a strong staff ! How many of the noble army of martyrs have met their doom in the arena, or gone up from blazing fagots in chariots of flame singing, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost ; as it was in the beginning, is now and

ever shall be!" Was ever a sweeter story than that of the passing of the aged John? A Voice from heaven said, "Surely I come quickly," and he answered, "Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Keep the faith! In the panoply of a good soldier, this is spoken of as "the shield wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the adversary." In the ancient courts of Greece a man who in the stress of battle had lost his sword, was acquitted; but he who had cast away his shield, was accounted guilty of cowardice. The highest honor that a soldier could win was to be carried out of the battle, wounded or dead, upon the shield which he had braced against his arm when he went forth to meet the foe. This, perhaps, was in the mind of the Apostle Paul when he wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!" Keep thy shield, O follower of Christ! Stand for the truth which thou hast professed, for the great verities which find their center in God. Be true to thy convictions; clear-eyed toward the things which are unseen and eternal, faithful to thy Lord. So fight the good fight and keep thy faith, until thou shalt receive the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give thee at that day.

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